

A black and white photograph of a night scene. In the foreground, four silhouetted figures are on a curved bridge or path that crosses a body of water. From left to right: a man walking, a woman standing, another woman standing, and a man riding a bicycle. The background features a dark, silhouetted church tower with a series of vertical openings, surrounded by trees and other buildings. The sky is dark with a bright, glowing light source, possibly the moon or a star, and some faint stars are visible. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

# THE SIMPLE VOWS ANTHOLOGY

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## ✿ EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE SIMPLE VOWS ANTHOLOGY

One of the central motifs of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—and of his work generally—is that human beings can always become more than they are. Obsessed with transcendence, he expresses the motif of "more than" in a myriad of images. For us, one that has always resonated the most is that of the bridge. In the prologue to *Zarathustra*, the narrator-visionary puts it this way: "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end . . . ." Borrowing from Tillich (who borrowed from St. Paul), one could say that the task of the "overman" is, then, to become no less than a "new being."

Both that theme—self-actualization—and the striking image that expresses it—the bridge—constitute the heart of the varied collection of poetry and prose contained in the book before you, *The Simple Vows Anthology*. All of the individuals in this volume have chosen written expression as a primary vehicle to embody their quest for higher fulfillment. And in one way or another, each piece in the anthology articulates some aspect of personal artistic development.

But while the central import of the image of the bridge is quite clear and comprehensible, we feel that the reader's understanding and appreciation of the project we have attempted may be enhanced by elaborating other meanings of "bridge" that Nietzsche may not have intended, but which are definitely consonant with the image. These additional, appropriate elucidations of the term "bridge" will, we think, help the reader envision what we were up to in this anthology—and, indeed, how apt the image really is. Nor, in our opinion, do any of these interpretations do violence to Nietzsche's thought; we are convinced that he, so adept at nuanced interpretation, would approve of our unpacking of one of his most potent metaphors.

First of all, a bridge is more than a straight, steady means to an end. One can—and often must, if human development is as uneven as psychologists like Erikson have proposed—travel forward and backward on it. This back-and-forth movement, which Heinz Hartzman labeled "regression in the service of the ego," is universally

necessary for growth. Especially, one might add, for writers and other artists, for whom every step can be accompanied by doubt, indecision, even danger. An extension of this point is that a neat, predictable linear concept of time is too simple to express the intricacies of human transformation. Time, then, becomes more of a swirl—steps and stages are not that clear and distinct. Above all, they are not entirely separate. One may, for example, return to a piece begun 20 years ago and, at last, see strategies that would improve it. This spiraling back is just one example of the temporal swirl that constitutes our subjective experience of time.

Because of the complexities outlined above, we have included in the anthology a number of works—poems, stories, essays—that first appeared years ago (for example, Locklin and Stetler's essay on Edward Field, which seems at least as relevant now as it did when it was published nearly 40 years ago in the *Minnesota Review*). A close reading of this piece, or of Fred Chappell's 1985 *Pembroke Magazine* tour de force's phenomenological take on the poetry of Ron Bayes, will show how timely such earlier studies of master poets are today. By continuing to articulate ways of thinking and being that can spur us on, aesthetically and otherwise, these writings still speak to us. They also highlight the work of individuals whose lifelong commitment to growth through art deserves to be honored more than the prevailing literary establishment has seen fit to, for tendentious ideological reasons of its own.

In fact, it could be that a number of these older pieces, which would seem to be dated, are far more developmentally useful than much of the contemporary chatter-writing thrown at us by the MFA factories and professors of literature. For the sake of this "old freshness" and the possibilities of significant growth that such work may bring forth again for a new generation, we have renounced all territorial claims to editorial "ownership" (always a tenuous term at best). We thank the editors and writers who, sharing this assumption, have allowed us to include these special works in a different, updated context. As one can easily infer, the placing of pieces from other times and literary venues in *The Simple Vows Anthology* is a direct result of the specific bridge elaboration outlined above.



A bridge is also a place where people meet—to laugh, cry, complain, provide companionship and constructive criticism, and, above all, experience a sense of unity that overrides the necessarily individualized nature of the projects they are pursuing. On a bridge you will find people of different ages, races, genders, ethnicities, cultures, and sexual orientations—all of these and more. This ideal bridge of the imagination is open to all—even, perhaps, to the dead. More than one piece in *The Simple Vows Anthology* addresses the kinship of living and dead—so movingly portrayed in the closing pages of the last story in Joyce's *Dubliners*. Sadly, during the nearly 3-year preparation of this book, some of the contributors to it have passed on. Each of these losses is painful, but none more so than the death in 2003 of our featured poet, Ken Hanson, a fixture at Reed College for decades, who in the final years of his life chose Athens over America. But in a crucial sense, Hanson, a modern incarnation of Tu Fu, is still here, his lean poems never cease moving us by the power and grace they exhibit, despite his not being able any longer to utter them. Thus the dead are somehow present on the great bridge of transformation, proving that the relationship of eternity to time is just as subtle as the internal relationships—past to present to future—within time itself.

To keep this especially fragile, but profound, aspect of the metaphor going, we should add that there is no dead spirit more present on the bridge we are imagining than that of Ezra Pound, whose concern for humanity, for "the Tribe" as such, and for the necessity of relentless striving to "make it new" through innovative writing, reverberates throughout this anthology. Bernard Dew (a medical doctor, like Williams) and Ron Bayes have contributed specific essays on Pound, but Hanson, too, was steeped in Pound, as were many of the Black Mountain bards, a primary (and too often unsung) representative of which, Ted Enslin, appears in *The Simple Vows Anthology*. Caught up in the generating of this introduction, it is easy for us to visualize old Ez with a host of writers gathered around him on the bridge. With minimal effort, we can picture him gesturing, encouraging, proclaiming, pruning the work of others on the spot, all in the service of his highest goal: to urge authors on to originality through disciplined attention to their own voices,

thoughtful appreciation of the achievements of past masters, and sheer love of the power of condensed, crafted expression that has not lost the glow of first intensity.

Fortunately, with Pound, as with Hanson, we are not left to merely visualize or imagine. Thanks to the kindness of Mary deRachewiltz, Pound's daughter, and the humble persistence of contributing editor Ron Bayes, a close friend of Mary's for many years and a Poundian in his bones, *The Simple Vows Anthology* has the distinct honor of presenting 3 original fragments Pound composed during his *Pisan Cantos* period. These fragments were recently published in Italy, but they are offered here in English for the first time. We extend our deepest gratitude to Mrs. deRachewiltz, who responded graciously to Ron's request for any of her father's remaining work by emailing him the 3 pieces that appear in our anthology. We are also extremely grateful for the generosity of the Italian publisher, Mondadori Press. To our knowledge, this is Pound's first appearance in English—in terms of original creative work—in decades, and we are thrilled to have *il migliore jabbro* in our midst—in our concrete literary embodiment of the bridge.

Another corollary of the Poundian presence in this volume—and of our image of the bridge—has to do with what dismissive scholars obsessed with defending their version of "the Canon" might call the "unevenness" of some of the writing in this volume. However, since written expression is not just something that godlike professional scribes are engaged in, what should one expect? When young and old and novice and master are gathered together in one anthology along with individuals struggling to deal with fresh insights, levels of success are bound to exist. And they should be allowed to be what they sometimes are: not always perfect but full of the fire of first intensity, at least. Perfect polish is, of course, present, and careful readers will recognize it. In fact, some of the works included—each person will have his/her favorites—shine like jewels in a Buddhist crown. But other pieces exhibit flashes of brilliance and/or profundity that, while deserving more attention from their creators, are worth exhibiting to the world because of such admirable qualities as openness, honesty, passion, and uniqueness of vision or expression.

Let there be then no apology for non-perfection. Let roughness be a necessary part of the ongoing process of growth that characterizes all serious attempts at linguistic and conceptual innovation. Long live individuality, community, and levels of artistic achievement! Pound would, we think, have agreed—still does, as he (in our imagination again) converses with seekers on the bridge—and with anyone, young or old, male or female, student or professor—who chooses to be drawn into the exhilarating quest for higher fulfillment that is the essence of the writer's rich walk-and-talk.

That last point—about "seekers"—also makes thematic the meaning of the anthology's title. That the quest for transcendent selfhood is a sacred task, a lifelong calling, Nietzsche clearly knew, and he blurred many a mode/genre distinction to drive this point home. Carroll F. Terrell, one of Pound's most erudite and insightful interpreters, (another Poundian, along with Hugh Kenner, who has recently passed on) was convinced that Pound's poetic enterprise was essentially religious. The long, laborious back-and-forth movement toward "the other side," toward human transcendence, is a type of religious being-in-the-world. The vows one takes are simple: not poverty, chastity, and obeisance to omniscient authority, but a resolute commitment to write clear, accurate, condensed poetry and prose that move us. And this commitment involves a sub-vow to be with others. It entails participation in a vibrant community, both with the living and with Shaw's "mighty dead," who are always available, if we listen, to instruct and inspire. The ideal goal, of course, is a unity of cultures in which we find ourselves approximating the Confucian virtue of "the rectification of names." When Iraqis commune with Americans, gays with straights, populists with Hamiltonians, or Christians with Hindus, the sacrament of the word, both as "flesh" on paper and as oral proclamation, reveals who we really are and at least partially justifies our existence on this planet.

On this note we leave you to peruse what we feel is a unique anthology of men and women who represent the entire spectrum of seekers. You will meet on these pages both unknowns such as Muriel Ramirez, a recent high-school grad, and such veterans of the literary scene as Ted Enslin, a Black Mountain ringer who has pub-

lished over one hundred books. You will encounter, too, the work of a half-dozen small-press editors (for example, James Michael Robbins of *Sulphur River Literary Review* and Chris Gibson of *Pitchfork* magazine). These are individuals who, determined not to let wilderness voices go unheard, have consistently published writers who don't fit the artificial mainstream standards established unilaterally by the "big house" publishers that dominate the literary landscape. Then, of course, there are in our anthology luminaries like Mishima, Pound, Chappell, Webb, Hanson, Locklin, Richie, Shiraishi, Yoshimasu, and a host of others that everyone with a pulse will recognize. Be prepared, in short, to discover in *The Simple Vows Anthology* a mixed bag of known and unknown. This arrangement is no accident. Such a mixture is the essence of authentic bridge existence.

Of course, writers need readers, without whom their efforts remain incomplete. It is our hope—utopian, perhaps—that a number of reader-seekers will join the rest of us in this century-spanning anthology and take part in the universal quest for a higher selfhood-in-community, one that strives to mitigate the traditionally separating differences of sex, race, culture, religion, ideology, and levels of achievement, and, with luck and the right imaginative perspective, perhaps even the frightening ravages of time.

Kemp Gregory  
Editor

## ☿ AFRICA

My brothers in the Congo  
Grab the dirt and not the diamonds.  
My Nigerians  
Snatch the deed and not the oil pump,  
Fight for our land,  
Or end up floating in the sea like our great fathers still are.  
Unite,  
And erase the lines drawn in sand by British colonization.  
Prevail,  
And assail the holdings of socioeconomic bondage,  
Be Loyal  
To principles  
To beliefs  
To Africa.  
Claim the right . . .  
That Africa has died for twice  
And resurrect the legacy of our dead rotting on the sea bottom.  
Resurrect the Legacy!  
Counteract the Supremacy with intelligence,  
Defeat the hateful and discriminating eye  
With the heart and tenacity of African Warriors.  
Be what Africa truly is . . .  
Royal  
Resplendent  
Mighty!

*Gilbert Abraham*

## ☯ AT TIMES

At times  
I now  
A man  
Cry.  
I let the pain  
Emotionally experienced  
Physically inflicted  
From the inside free.  
I bleed the smarting from my being.  
I wonder,  
Am I then but lifeless organs and a skeleton?  
Am I but a mummified bum on the corner sipping whiskey till I keel over and die?  
Because I couldn't face the firm faced grill of reality.  
I perceive it all to be a tragedy  
A life is a fallacy  
A repeated failure  
To achieve to succeed  
To be  
To face trials  
Obstacles  
Tribulation.  
Climbing . . .  
To what . . .  
A self appointed goal  
That grows weak.  
Bleak  
Must one ask the meek  
Or fall upon hands and feet in submission  
And  
Cry.

*Gilbert Abraham*

⌘ DEMONIAK'S PRAYER

Let fly the demons on the wing:  
Purge away memories  
That lie rigid upon me  
Like tombstones  
Gnashing all my attempts  
To reach out beyond  
The darkness and the cold—  
May the pigs be  
Close at hand  
And the sea.

*Peggy Anderson*



☯ all clouds are dogs

even if they have long, long  
crested tails and sharp teeth

she kept seeing monsters and  
dragons and holes in the clouds that were  
really mouths wide open, yelling out rage or  
unspeakable unknowable fear but

all he could see were puppies and dogs  
he'd point them out to her and all of a sudden  
those gaping, screaming, anguished headless  
mouths became soft and fluffy  
and inviting

*Sharon Ankrum*

## ☞ Child in Connecticut

"Say I didn't have a radio," the girl wrote, "when the leaning tower of Pisa fell on the president?" What could you have done, child, without a radio when the Martians landed on H.G. Wells? Or without a television to watch the war in your room? Or, what about this? What if the leaning tower fell in a forest? Would there even have been a sound? And what if a bloody child crawled from your television war to your Barbie village? What then?

*Sharon Ankrum*

☼ not having ever written a love poem,

you have no clue no  
clue as to how to proceed except that  
his smile turns you on your turns you on  
your heel in order  
to run in order to  
run and run and

if a god comes to you in the  
night if a  
god comes to you  
if a god is a whirling  
dervish a whirling  
dervish a man

a man who knows who  
gets it who gets  
you he gets you  
he gets him and he  
gets you

so that when you turn  
on that heel, when you turn to  
run, you find the trail  
of mist of the dervish of the  
whirling, whirling spiral  
you find it wrapping around and  
around your body, your body  
which has become what  
what has your body become if  
you're not sure the dervish can stand  
the heat the glowing vessel  
the glow that  
you have become?

*Sharon Ankrum*

## ☿ Real Time

Wallets aren't supposed to be fished for.  
Like money one doesn't do that.  
But there were these boats  
tied together in a line  
on the river in Oregon.  
and my grandfather's wallet fell  
from his pocket from the boat  
tied to the others while we fished.  
The wallet floated above the trout  
until someone leaned over  
cupped his hands lifted the wallet  
and then each in the line  
passed it from hand to hand  
in the line of boats tied  
till Grandpa felt it knew it  
put it back where it belonged.  
A line a long line  
A beginning a middle an end.  
I want it to have been that simple.

*Sharon Ankrum*

## ☿ She Held on to the Crumb

kneading it over and over and over  
thinking hoping it would rise but  
it wasn't even dough  
just a tiny crumb  
fallen from an already  
baked loaf dry dead  
not the mother loaf load lode  
no and she saw  
the crumb had dried up

she knows now the loaf will  
never rise knows  
that mother pain is not the pain of  
birthing, nor of being born it's the  
pain of no love  
the mother of all pain

*Sharon Ankrum*

## ⌘ Where Are You?

At the beginning of our lives our father used to play a game:  
He lay inert upon the floor while we swarmed on him.  
Punching him, changing his arms from one position to another  
like a rag doll.

We loved our power till we got sick of it.  
Then we hollered into his face, "Come out!"  
We pulled his eyelids up to force him to look at us,  
But his eyeballs rolled upward and beyond,  
leaving the whites.

We dared not do the act to prove he was on earth, alive, with us:  
we dared not stop his mouth to suffocate him,  
nor smash his face to make him cry aloud.  
Our only other choice was to abandon him.

But he always sensed the moment we would leave, and opened one eye  
which looked at us quite clearly but without recognition.  
Then he jumped up and walked away,  
dismissing us as if he had never been dead.

*Daphne Athas*

## ॐ

pause,

Peggy Aylsworth



✿ A BALL LIKE A COMET

To stand & sing,  
part of the boisterous crowd—  
After 80 summers  
I still can make a joyful noise  
as the hometeam hitter  
slams the ball above the stands.  
Caught with the throng, I soar,  
a comet, whirling beyond the glossy towers,  
over the fruited plains, crackling  
the air to the farthest reach . . .  
into diamond stellar space!  
What is the need to join  
the 50,000 voices as they cheer  
in this win/lose game, old  
as Farmer In the Dell—  
but getting high when  
the other side is creamed?

*Peggy Aylsworth*

☞ I REMEMBER

your bending to the earth,  
the sweep of your arm.

We didn't know  
what lay ahead.

You said you were clearing  
rocks from the path.

You didn't want  
anyone who followed us to fall.

*Wendy Barker*

☿ I DON'T KNOW

where you came from.  
Always, you were there.

Our steps, easy  
on the narrowest

paths. Your back, hip,  
moving, mine.

*Wendy Barker*

✿ BUTTERFLY

After, we lay still, our  
backs in touch as if  
we had become one body.

Quieted. The way  
our heads, knees, resting,  
leaned to either side,

the tips of latticed wings,  
readying for the flight ahead.  
We did not think in halves.

*Wendy Barker*

☯ NOW YOU ARE

nowhere. I can't even  
remember your hand

across my breasts, so  
delicate I became

one breast, a rush  
of softness. Our mouths

and tongues, all petals,  
one full rose opening

after light rain, not yet  
yanked from the plant.

*Wendy Barker*

☞ ONCE

the scent of jasmine sifted  
air, we could only turn

with the sway of  
stem, petal, trunk, until

we neither one could  
stay upright. Leaning,

dropping to the grasses,  
how strange that afterward

we simply rose. Was it  
jasmine that blended us

into this intricate twining?  
And such a tiny blossom.

*Wendy Barker*

☯ EVEN ROSE PETALS

fan out, away from each other,  
still touching till they drift

off, and down, like blown rain  
to the ground that drinks them.

Maybe you have been  
closer than I had thought,

across a crest of another hill,  
just ripening.

*Wendy Barker*

## ☯ UNDERGROUND POETRY, COLLECTING POETRY, AND THE LIBRARIAN

Over the last decade the publication of poetry has proliferated. There are more publishing poets in the United States, more venues for their poetry and more poetic networks than ever before. Poetry is developing along many lines of thought and form. There are many avant-gardes. My charge in the 1990s at The Poetry/Rare Books Collection, State University of New York of Buffalo (a boreal city at the western end of New York State) is to track and collect without prejudice all forms of poetry published by the various movements and networks of poets and publishers and to collect it all in its original form. Answering my charge has presented a number of problems; among them are locating the networks, contacting the poets/publishers/editors, and harvesting their publications. There is a major contradiction in my work. Libraries are orderly places. They are becoming more orderly with the advent of technology but also more interested in technology. With deep and ever looming budget cuts, increased work loads, production and project deadlines, and out-jobbing and out-sourcing, librarians step back from an intimacy with specific subject. Subject specialty and sensitivity are on the back burner. Poetry in the United States, however, functions on an intimate, personal level. It is becoming more personal and intimate as corporate culture attempts to dominate all facets of literary life. Underground poetry, for instance, is only user friendly to friendly users.

Underground poetry is unruly and rebellious. Underground Poetry (UP) does not follow the sanctions or trends of ordained art culture (ordained by mass culture or intellectual, sophisticated, or elitist taste and refinement). UP is not financially supported by religious, political academic, or any form of bureaucracy. In fact UP goes purposefully contrary to these established bureaucratic institutions (including libraries). UP is anti-traditional, anti-conservative, purposefully controversial, confrontational, and boastfully independent. UP is outside conventional organized literary society. Conventional is the key word. In this sense UP is both avant-garde and anti-art, expansive and narrow.

UP exists outside of poetry academia and conventional American poetry (the



realm of the Academy of American Poets, for example, or the network of creative writing departments cloned from the Iowa workshop) but not distantly afield. It is more an estranged, bordering neighbor, or poetry from the other side of the tracks. It is a Third World of poetry. In this Third World are several literary communities. There is, for instance, a network of visual/concrete poets. (*O! Zone* magazine and press from Houston, Texas is an example and another was Phoenix, Arizona's *MaLLife*. The last issue of the *MaLLife* was issued in a plastic zip-lock baggie.) There is zine poetry, which is often sexually aggressive and seeks honesty rather than banal art. Oyster Press from Austin, Texas (formerly of Chicago) is an example of a zine poetry press and Oyster's zine *Lime Green Bulldozer* is a typical poetry zine. The editor and publisher of Oyster Press is Lainie (the oyster). In her catalog's *Mission Statement* Lainie writes, "The philosophy behind oyster publications has always been that ANYONE can write. ANYONE can create." Oyster has published books like: *My Mouth is a Hole In My Face* by Lori Jackson, Ben Weasel's *Brady Bunch Behemoth*, *Tour Diaries and Various Shit*, and amongst many others, Shane Paul's *Mutilations*. (Shane Paul is a Phoenix, Arizona performance poet and among his many books are: *Modern Krucifixion* and *Quietly Scream*. His publications usually feature photographs of road kill.) There is also a supra-realistic "Naked Poetry," so dubbed by Ron Androla, an Erie, Pennsylvania factory worker, whose books include *Don't Read This Poem* and 69 (see his essay *Naked Poetry in the 1990s* in *The Best of Impetus*). This poetry acknowledges and engages the hard, harsh, dysfunctional, and often socially problematic lives of men and women who live in the now expanding working and lower classes or bottom third of American society. It is an earthy and candid ranting of truth, dark truth, tainted truth, and its philosophy is practical American drugstore philosophy. This poetry is narrative, expressionistic, and sarcastic. It aims to communicate and utilize life experiences shunned or forgotten by conservative and conventional poetry.

An early practitioner of this socially realistic poetry is Charles Bukowski, a poet widely admired and read by "The Naked Poets." Bukowski wrote in Doug Blaskek's

Ole magazine, "We no longer accept dry and safe bread. Poetry is going into the streets, into the whorehouses, into the sky, into the picnic basket, into the whiskey bottle. The fraud is over—certain people will not be allowed to live while others die" (Bukowski 1967). This notion acts as a permission to generate street or Naked Poetry.

There are dozens of lumpen poets that comprise "The Naked Network," among them Kurt Nimmo, Ron Androla, Pat Mckinnon, Mark Hartenback and Batya Goldman. An anthology titled *The Best of Impetus: The First Ten Years* has recently been published and features representative poetry from this network, which has existed long enough to spawn a second generation. Edited and published by Cheryl Townsend, aka CAT, it defines the literary limits of this naked network. The anthology features the poems of more than 100 poets. Among them is poet Mark Weber. His poem *Life in the Poetry Reserves* documents the morning after an underground poetry bash. Weber writes, ". . . Sunday morning/ casualties sprawled throughout the house/ hardly any light coming through the curtains/ I came to, flat on my back/ on a couch 3 feet short" (Weber 1996, 168).

Mark Weber is among the senior members of the "Naked" UP network. His bio reads: "I'm a second generation Okie born in 1953 in Southern California of dust bowl immigrants from Wichita. Conscripted in my teens to play guitar in my grandfather's country music bands. Have been in 8 jails in California (no crimes against people—just drunk driving and other set-ups)" (Weber 1988). Weber's Zrex press, now located in Albuquerque, New Mexico (formerly of Cleveland, Ohio and Salt Lake City, Utah), has produced dozens of titles, including his own: *Be Honest Like a Knife*, *Hogwash*, and *Drunk City*. In Albuquerque, Weber and Zrex Press are now an active center of UP naked poetry, and with Gregory Smith, editor of Atom Mind magazine, form a constellation of underground editors, publications and poets, among them: Todd Moore (author of the long tribute poem titled *Dillenger*), Judson Crews (a long time advocate of sexually frank writing) and Kell Robertson, an underground cowboy poet. Weber is now a major publisher of Gerald Locklin's poems, which unites the New Mexican undergrounders with a constellation of poets in Long Beach, California, among them Ray Zepada and

Joan Jobe Smith, a former exotic dancer.

Another "Naked Poet," some twenty years younger than Mark Weber, is Robert W. Howington of Fort Worth, Texas. Howington is a literary entrepreneur who operates his own Home Made Ice Cream Press. In the introduction to his book *Spiked Slurpee*, Howington writes, "Robert W. Howington, dubbed 'Generalissimo' . . . runs HOME MADE ICE CREAM PRESS w/a semi-automatic handgun always at his side. From his Fort Worth, Texas, apartment's bedroom's second corner he produced four magazines—*Bukowski and Serial Killers*, *Flaming Envelopes*, *Experiment in Words* and *A Bug in My Fries Magazine*" (Howington 1994). He has published chap books by (the above mentioned) Todd Moore, Lyn Lifsin (the Queen of small press publishing) and others. Finally, Howington writes, "I watch too much (M)TV and am considered a Charles Bukowski nut by everybody I know, including the cockroach who lives behind my bookshelf" (Howington 1994). After a publishing flurry he stopped. His literary press became silent. This is not unusual in world of UP poets and editors. There is an aura of romanticism in the UP press. It is a form of purity. It's not unlikely that Howington just refused to communicate. Libraries and university librarians are often perceived as the enemy. This happens, and it will happen again. The underground press runs on passion and principle. Going so far underground as to have no relation to mainline culture is part of the nobility and lure of the fugitive press. Nevertheless, The Poetry Collection at Buffalo holds Home Made Ice Cream Press publications. When I last checked they were the only Howington publications in the OCLC database and The Poetry Collection has the only complete collection of Weber's Zrex publications in OCLC. But the underground press is very volatile, shifting and always responding to cultural currents. Tomorrow this world could change, or at least change players.

In the early 1990s Arizona poet Amy M. Bowling published her magazine, *Journal of Sister Moon* (a literary zine that featured the latest in bondage fashion, full sexual expression and semi and completely nude men and women). This magazine and press have disappeared. The impetus and energy that created *The Journal of Sister Moon* can be directly traced to the censorship issues surrounding Robert Mapplethorpe and Helm's attack on the NEA. *The Journal of Sister Moon* was a moment in literary

time. Its purpose was to promote free sexual expression and sexually explicit speech. This point was made, as this co-authored poem by Amy M. Bowling and Paul Weinman attests:

Walking  
I tell you I want you  
and your response is a smile.  
Stopping  
You grab me from behind  
and thrust deep inside me.  
Quivering  
I lean back against you  
and your tongue fills my mouth  
Sighing  
Our fluids run down my thighs  
and you tell me you love me. (Bowling and Weinman 1991?)

The Journal of Sister Moon now remains an icon. It was a personal, political and romantic response to government censorship of the arts.

UP has also fostered a number of extended underground literary careers. There are major movers and giants in this world. Paul Weinman (who was the imaginary partner of Amy Bowling) is one. He is known best as his persona: White Boy, a bumbling, middle class white man confused by rampant racism, sexism and censorship. He now strips nude to read his poems. And there is Gerald Locklin, affectionately known as Toad (an English professor at Long Beach State College). And there is Cheryl A. Townsend, aka CAT (a security person for the J.C. Penney Corporation). They command a reading, appreciative audience. And while their books may not sell as many copies as a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, for instance maybe 8 thousand total copies, poets like Paul Weinman, who is unknown to 99% of conventional poetry audiences, is read by more uninfluential people than the number of creative writing faculty in this country combined. Weinman has self published, and self distributed, more than 160 thousand of his White Boy pamphlets.

The realm of UP is the poetry zine, micro-press poetry magazine, broadside or poem card, pamphlet, chap-book or little book of poetry. They are published by small, independent presses, which are most often regional and operated by an editor/poet. As noted in the Writing and Technology section of *Technology/Art* by Bruce Andrews, Charles Bernstein and James Sherry, the most important modern technological development for writing and reading has been the combination of inexpensive printing and photocopying with increasingly efficient typewriter/word processors. These developments—a kind of second Gutenberg revolution—have made available to writers the means of producing their work quite independently, without going through capital-intensive centralized publishers. At the same time, they potentially make available to readers access to a wider range of contemporary writing than ever before. Specifically, the minimal cost of book production enables "literary" and other writing a relative freedom from constraints imposed when the largest possible audience is sought (constraints that may inhibit the choice of syntax and style as well as subject) (Andrews, Bernstein, and Sherry 1995, 9).

The gulf between UP and accepted conventional poetry is immense and involves more than the number of monographs produced. As innovative and progressive, as well as quirky, odd and assaulting and insulting as UP is, it is almost never recognized as having artistic or cultural value. But for research purposes into poetic development and poetic history, the history of literary culture, the budding poet, the new avant guardian, those fascinated with Modernism, Beat Poetry, Black Mountain Poetry, zine poetry, feminist poetry, multi-cultural poetry, anarchism and anarchist poetry, L = A = N = G = U = A = G = E poetry, etc., these little publications by romantic, bohemian, eccentric, iconoclastic poets and editors are invaluable. Because of the fugitive nature of these publications and because of their elusiveness and because they exist outside conventional literary spheres, collecting them is a major problem even after there is an understanding of their role and importance to literature, culture and poetry. They are outside of the lanes where libraries traditionally acquire publications. This is a dilemma for the collecting library, special collection, or librarian. The dilemma rests generally in the realm

of small press distribution. Mark Hartenback of Non Compos Menti Press of East Liverpool, Ohio wrote me that, "It costs more to mail these books than print them" (Hartenback 1996). There is no inclusive, efficient, distribution network for most of UP poetry, particularly because poetry is a very small business.

To locate UP publications a library collecting small press materials must engage, that is embrace, the culture it is collecting. In The Poetry Collection's case, this means the underground literary culture, with its ebbs and flows, stars, minor players, passions and taboos. UP publications demand special treatment. To be effective a special collection should first be regional. For instance, if I could travel with ease to Fort Worth to have a drink with Bob Howington, The Poetry Collection would probably hold all his publications. Networks of little literary special collections could form a network of poetry collecting that would ensure that all UP publications would be in libraries. Perhaps that's only an imagination. Nevertheless, collecting locally allows a librarian to be intimate with the culture she is collecting.

The special collection has to have the flexibility and ability to create its own collection development fashion. A UP collection should be inventive, free floating, unbridled and free wheeling, as least as free wheeling as UP poetry imagines itself to be. Collecting must be organic. There are no forms that guide the collector. A librarian has to become a UP librarian at a UP collection. This means, in this instance, accepting libertarian publications, morals, and poetics and politics or to rise above personal points of view for the purpose of The Collection. This is, of course, romantic. Why not? Flexibility dissolves conservative convention in the realm of collecting. A hand shake over a cup of coffee, bottle of beer, and yes, dish of ice cream, a book of stamps, or ready cash, work better, much better, in this personal, alternative world than letterhead invoices and order slips printed on rolled or JAPAN paper. Independent presses are one person operations. The passion is to produce books and publish poetry that would not otherwise be printed. Responding to an invoice is book-keeping not book making. And if your library pays a homemade invoice with a check to, for example, Concrete Block in Your Face Press, and not the editor, then this is yet another can of worms. I once had a

check made out to the poet Antler, which I then had to cosign because he needed money for bus-fare back to Milwaukee. You can imagine my attempting to explain the what and whys of Antler to a bank teller, while Antler stood next to me with his long beard, hair flowing over his shoulders, and a Moses-like walking staff.

Promoting zines and UP is also important and serves as a link in the trust and faith chain which needs to be established to faithfully collect UP. Publishing in zines and poetry magazines is important. A positive mini-review of a small publication will assure that a steady stream of free UP publications will follow. A librarian could lecture and deliver papers on UP poets and publications at major conferences. Also, staging literary events is another mode by which trust and links can be established. Literary events are managed with small amounts of money. I ran an event called *Poets from Hell* in Buffalo, which resulted in a half dozen long term UP friendships. Letters, announcements, poem cards, broadsides and books and tapes arrive at The Collection with amazing regularity. Most of these are free. Above all one must be gracious, fascinated and appreciative of the work, the poetry, the effort and the editors and poets. They are the foundation for all poetry in America. Collecting is both a personal and professional effort.

Once gathered, the material is not ephemeral publishing but is a unique cultural/poetic/literary icon, which needs to be honored in the same fashion as one would treat a long canonized poet. We must remember that William Blake was an independent publisher, that *Walden* was self published, that William Carlos Williams paid for the publication of his first book, that Sylvia Beach was in essence a small press publisher. At the Poetry Collection when a chap-book by Joan Jobe Smith arrives, it is cataloged and placed in an acid free folder and housed with: Susan Smith Nash (editor of Texture Press and Magazine from Norman, Oklahoma); and British poet Stevie Smith; and Washington D.C.'s Rod Smith. They are all equal and treated as equals. All MARC records are customized. We trace all blurbs, illustrators, forewords, afterwards, introductions, and note the fashion in which each book is produced, colors of fly-leaves, etc. Our collection is a collection of the camera eye. Everything in the scene is captured: the red wheelbarrow glazed with rain water and the illegally slaughtered elephant or tiger.

The proof is in the poetry collection. These things work. Musician and poet Dave Alvin appears on a National Public Radio program, and his book is in our Collection. His literary mentor happened to be Gerald Locklin. Lock's books, many published by Mark Weber, are in the poetry collection. Locklin reads in Buffalo because I had on-hand an interview which I did with him for a patron to read. The poet has the performance, and I will again have the opportunity to speak with him personally. I wrote two reviews of his chap-books, and they will soon appear in a magazine in Japan. The editor of the Japanese magazine, *Blue Beat Jacket*, Yuseke Kieda, was recently published by old time beat poet Herschel Silverman of Bayonne, New Jersey. I am writing an article on Herschel's connection with the Beat Generation. His latest book is being published by Ron Whitehead who is reinvigorating Beat poetry in Louisville, Kentucky. Whitehead's latest book *Bone Man* is in the Poetry Collection. I recently wrote a short review of it for the *Taproot Reviews*. This is really how the poetry world works.

Recently, I assembled an exhibition: 50 Years of Poetry in Buffalo. It featured more than 400 books, magazines, posters, pamphlets and slingers and newsletters collected from the eight western New York counties. It was meant to honor all those who have taken part in western New York's literary life. And that it did. But as I assembled it and walked our patrons and guests through the exhibit, I found that it was a narrative about poetry and culture. The history of small press publication in western New York was revealed. It was a microcosm of the larger poetry world. Cultural trends and concerns were obvious. There was anti-war radicalism, the swirling mimeograph covers of the zine culture, naked poetry, and a new avant-garde. Literary culture is always counting pulse and responding. Hot topics flash and disappear. UP poets are beginning to produce more and more cassettes. Recorded spoken word is establishing itself as a means of literary communication for a generation raised on cassettes and CDs. The cassette magazine and CD monograph must still be collected, gathered. They, like chap-books and zines, are published by small press publishers. They exist, oftentimes free at coffee houses, in art bars, at poetry readings, at guerrilla galleries. There is no place better to store and collect and protect these important poetry monographs than at a spe-



cial collection in a collecting library—a special collection staffed by a passionate, romantic, perhaps eccentric, UP librarian.

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*Michael Basinski*

## ☿ David's Dream

David calls from Pittsburgh to tell me  
he dreamt of the time he, Phil and I  
rode dirt bikes at Jim West's farm.

We were still in high school, defrocked  
altar boys with octane between our legs,  
too dumb to know life is a robin's egg

in the coarse hand of God. Above  
the chorus of clouds paid no attention  
to the insane risks we took for one another.

They knew the way things would turn out.  
The truth, though I would not confess this  
to David, is that I have never in my life

set foot on the West farm. But I ride gratefully  
into my friend's dream to see Philip again.  
Shooting helmetless through pines, slicing

wheelies up ditch walls, hurdling barbed wire,  
long hair and beard acrylic black,  
a J.W. Dant pint, a pack of Tarot and Newports

fastened in the bib of his overalls,  
tortoise-shell glasses mud-spattered  
like he had just throttled out of a Marvel comic book.  
He's laughing  
and we're laughing because he's so crazy.  
There is a knock upon the door of this dream.

Philip enters wearing a red shirt and jeans,  
his hair trimmed and gauzy at the temples.  
He puts his arms around David and me.

He tells us everything is alright.  
The three of us watch him fly, thirty years ago,  
through the monumental sky of David's dream.

*Joseph Bathanti*

## ☞ The Early Creeley

In 1982, the University of California Press brought out *The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley: 1945-1975*. The book is roughly the size of a brick, dense, yet with the same fluidity and elusiveness that characterizes his inimitable work. On the cover is a photograph of the author, a cross between an assassin and a gargoyle, about to breathe fire. Robert Creeley has been one of the most enduring voices in American letters for over half a century.

Creeley was born in Arlington, Massachusetts in 1926. By the time he was five years old, he had lost his father and his left eye. He matriculated at Harvard, but left for the American Field Service in India and Burma, and never graduated. His correspondence with Charles Olson led him to Black Mountain College, where he taught in 1954 and 1955, and founded and edited *Black Mountain Review* from 1954-1957. His list of books and honors is prodigious. As one of the most famous luminaries of Black Mountain College, he has in his humble fashion ascended to legend. Despite calling himself a "Puritan," and his zest for poetry and delivering it to audiences everywhere remained constant throughout his career.

Long before I had ever heard of Black Mountain College, I ran across Creeley's poems in *Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by Donald Hall. Poems like "For Love," "Kore," "The Rain," all represented in the *Collected*. I didn't know what to make of their deceptive simplicity. But I liked them and resisted the urge, though barely, to try and write like him. A few years later someone gave me a dog-eared, rain-damaged bootleg copy of Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry*. There was Creeley again, just as simple, just as inscrutable: fourteen poems, including "A Counterpoint," "Just Friends," "Three Ladies." There was also his statement on poetics: "To Define." In it he said something that stuck: "Speech is an assertion of one man, by one man." It made me think that maybe I could write poems. But when I strayed over into his "Olson & Others: Some Orts for Sports," I grew dizzy and had to put down the book. I didn't get it. I picked Creeley up again in graduate school—by then I was hot and heavy into Black Mountain—and realized I hadn't gotten him because I hadn't heard him.

Robert Creeley is a poet who must be heard to be *appreciated* and understood.

In the sense that his verse is genuine music, a practiced ear is essential. It is no secret that Creeley, along with other poets of his generation, notably the Beats and the Black Mountaineers, was profoundly influenced by Jazz. Like that musical form, Creeley concerns his poetry with timing, rhythm, improvisation, and a sense of surprise. The poem that evangelized me is "I Know A Man," arguably his most famous, which I had read with veiled ears all those years ago in the Hall anthology.

As I sd to my  
friend, because I am  
always talking—John, I

sd, which was not his  
name, the darkness sur-  
rounds us, what

can we do against  
it, or else shall we &  
why not, buy a goddam big car,

drive, he sd, for  
christ's sake, look  
out where yr going.

The poem plops us squarely into its action which takes place in a speeding automobile; and like the travelers inside the moving car, the poem too is driving. It is one long sentence of four stanzas which interrupts itself so that the garrulous speaker can take a blow, then rush on to his next thought as he simultaneously rushes toward his unnamed destination.

In the first stanza, the line breaks come at "my," a personal pronoun; "am," a first person singular verb, and also the present tense of *be*; and "I" another personal pro-

noun. His latter "I," coupled with the preceding "I am" is the self, the ego, insisting upon itself. By breaking the line this way, with these egocentric words, Creeley leaves us in the hands of the zany speaker. In the next stanza he breaks with "his" (referring to the fellow we know only in the slang sense as "John"; or perhaps as the anonymous John Doe), "sur-", and "what." This stanza does not have the cocksurety of the first. This has much to do with the tentative shift in voice and line break. There is also a sudden plaintiveness to the syntax, which carries into the first line of the third stanza. "His" suddenly refers to something outside the speaker, something the speaker can't control. The mood also suddenly shifts with the "darkness." It suggests a helplessness that is antithetical to the speaker's earlier, nearly flippant, tone. The last word of the stanza, "what," underscores that sense of helplessness and also introduces an innocence in its interrogative.

Further, since the stanza ends with "what," Creeley is able in the space between stanzas to hold the reader in abeyance. This suspension, this uncertainty, continues until the middle of line two. The "or else" is vaguely sinister. "Or else," as when used in gangster movies ("Open the safe, or else . . ."), can only be unthinkable, some unpleasant extreme. But the speaker counters these presentiments (and Creeley's imagery) of doom and dissolution with the optimistic "shall we." But he does not seem at all sure yet what it is he will suggest they do. Creeley rather ingeniously ends the line with an ampersand, rather than with the simple coordinating conjunction, "and." While "and" would speed the reader to the next line, the ampersand stands visually like a wall between the speaker's motivation to do and his quandary about what it is he wants to do. Given, however, the implicit characterization of the speaker in the first stanza, we can see the lightbulb pop on in his head ("Why not, buy a goddam big car"), and the poem is again rushing forward. With that line, the last of stanza three, we are left with the utter fantasy of the suggestion, extending through the stanza break, until the car's other passenger makes his crusty presence known.

Stanza four jars the driver out of his dream and back into the temporal world. Still, we can deduce, the journey continues; yet there is a decided emotional shift.

The ego, the "I," is now being addressed, rather than doing the addressing. While the friend's tone is at least gently chastising, it urges the driver forward; yet, still, there seems no clear destination. Driving, traveling, is an end in itself. Creeley breaks the first two lines of the last stanza with "for" and "look." They are classic Creeley breaks, which set up interrogatives. Of these breaks, the reader asks "what?" and "where?" respectively, at the end of each line. There is a vast subjective landscape beyond.

The last line ends with "going," which is the poem's refrain and drive. Ending this way, the poem and its characters keep going, if, for nothing else, "christ's sake." Creeley shows himself to be a master of a colloquial, easy, unpretentious, pedestrian music. His use of "goddam" and "christ's sake" is intriguing. They function not only as cusses, but also as prayers which seem, on both occasions, to relocate the speaker.

While "I Know a Man" is a poem of dislocation, it also has a built-in musical serendipity. "The Bird" functions similarly.

What did you say to me  
that I had not heard  
She said she saw  
a small bird.

Where was it.  
In a tree.  
Ah, he said, I thought  
you spoke to me.

While the reader is trying to sort out the people (pronouns) in the poem, and keep the transmission of information straight and manageable, the bird, which occupies line four so wholly and so concretely, focuses one's attention and focalizes the poem. The bird is the absolute center of the poem. It also occupies the

space between stanzas. It and the tree are the only objects, the only "things" to visualize. Their lines, respectively, provide a stasis that the rest of the poem lacks. The title, too, also helps anchor the poem. In the other lines, there is a hesitation, a tentativeness that creates dislocation between speech and listening. The bird and the "she" studying it are framed by the doggerel of the two speakers. This is a poem, really, about observation, albeit in minimalist Creeley fashion. Said Charles Olson: "Observation of any kind is, like argument in prose, properly previous to the act of the poem, and, if allowed in, must be so juxtaposed, apposed, set in, that it does not, for an instant, sap the going energy of the content toward its form."

The various unexpected ways that Creeley breaks his lines, and the nuance of meanings they set up, continue to be the most innovative aspect of his poetry. One finds oneself in a near trance, examining the ways in which his lines can be read and their meanings construed. In most of his poems, there remains a rather wonderful, though perplexing, ambiguity. His method is to approximate language with the leaps the mind takes. These shifts are extremely startling. One must concentrate as Creeley distills the mind's action through its abrupt and dislocating shifts. His technique of charting emotions as rhythms is inspired by his preoccupation with jazz. He effects this in many of his poems, using his line breaks as energy junctions (junctures), syncopating the rhythms, each line and what comes after with different kinds of syllabic, musical pauses. These end-line pauses allow him to emphasize the unexpected at the beginning of the next line.

"The Ball Game" is a poem that embodies these disparate elements Creeley typically composites in his poems. It focuses on the single moment of the speaker rising for a hot dog and having mustard spilled on him. The first three lines function as riffs. These same lines reappear to relocate and reorient the speaker at the end of the poem. This kind of repetition, the use of a *base*, or *home* point, is very characteristic of music and song. In the very musical "The Ball Game," Creeley brilliantly uses this kind of riff-repetitive technique.



The one damn time (7th inning)  
standing up to get a hot dog someone spills  
mustard all over me.

The conception is  
the hit, whacko!  
Likewise out of the park

of our own indifferent vulgarity, not  
mind you, that one repents even the most visual  
satisfaction.

Early in life the line is straight  
made straight  
against the grain.

Take the case of myself, and why not  
since these particulars need  
no further impetus,  
take me at the age of 13  
and for some reason there, no matter the particular  
reason.

The one damn time (7th inning)  
standing up to get a hot dog someone spills  
mustard all over me.

In the first three lines, Creeley very deliberately breaks his lines so that each perception or action leads immediately to the next. This stanza triggers introspection and digression on the part of the speaker. The next line, "The conception is," broken

the way it is and ending with the verb, creates a kind of infinity of "conception." The conception "lives" by virtue of the fact that it is conceived and conceived of. In other words, there is nothing but the conception. Thus Creeley can hold time and reality in abeyance. They are relative within "The conception." The speaker is then jarred by the onomatopoetic "whacko!" which is not only the *sound* of bat on ball, but is also slang for crazy. Creeley uses "whacko!" replete with exclamation point, to enhance the feeling of dislocation. The reader, along with the speaker, then travels with the ball, "Likewise out of the park," beyond the perimeters of the temporal, and even the corporal ("our own indifferent vulgarity"). Creeley poses "satisfaction" on a line of its own, and squarely in the middle of the poem. This sudden smugness comes not only from the "visual" beauty of the traveling ball, but also at the notion of being beyond the constraints of time and space.

In the fourth stanza, the first two lines break with "straight," as though insisting upon a particular course of life, and perhaps paralleling the line of the ball in flight. The last line of the stanza, "against the grain," undercuts the notion of straightness and regularity. It also creates a kind of intersection or perpendicularity. One is also reminded of the grain of a baseball bat. Getting beyond this stanza, the speaker turns to himself. But he has "no further impetus" and seems stalled at "13." A wonderful line is "take me at the age of 13."

First of all, there is sufficient ambiguity in "take me," so that the speaker is offering himself as a paradigm, a sacrifice, and is also hearkening back to that age. The "13" stands, like the ampersand in "I Know A Man," as a definite and visual obstacle. Like the speaker's, the reader's progress is there momentarily arrested. Thirteen is considered by the superstitious to be unlucky. It is also the age of advent into puberty, adulthood, when one becomes a teenager. The next line, "and for some reason there, no matter the particular," seems to articulate how independently the mind and memory work in free association. The last line of the stanza, "reason," is not only a command to "reason," but also brings up the "reason" that the speaker, in a welter of dislocation and free association, is on his

feet. The poem has repeated its first stanza. It moves like all of Creeley's poems, typical of his fascination with musical improvisation, in a circle, delivering the reader back home at its closure.

*The Collected Poems* is certainly a propitious place to start considering Creeley. Much more of his groundbreaking, lyrical work has appeared since the 1987 volume that I have reviewed in this paper. And for good reason. His poetry continues to inspire critics and readers alike. Quite simply, he is one of our best..

*Joseph Bathanti*

## ☼ The Mexican Set

I.

Christmas. One day before it.  
South from Walla Walla to  
out of San Francisco.  
Sun in the window.  
I sweat good sweat,  
move into the 3rd martini.  
Stranger next to me smiles straight  
ahead. "Beats  
hell outa  
cola, don't it?"

II.

Dear One, you are so many thousands of miles away.  
I write you postcards. The hand shakes. I write big.  
People here seem happy at Christmas. Each year.  
Each year a new and funny affectation. It's eyelashes  
this year. 20 pesos a set. Or was it 4?  
Grannys & kiddies & me bat at each other in  
Chapultepec Park about midnight and laugh and laugh  
and laugh.  
It has been long since  
I laughed. To myself.  
Out of joy.

III.

Back in the City he sits  
in the courtyard, sun high  
& hot on the shoulders.

He is drinking too much.  
He is thinking of years. You. Years.  
How will the future  
ones  
go?

IV.  
*(Christmas afternoon bullfight: Queretaro)*

His bloodshot eyes  
roll, roll  
he hears cheers. Blood streams. Streams  
of those who love him  
in a way  
as he goes down  
into the soft black  
finite.

*Ron Bayes*

☞ THE "MYSTERY SENATOR" AND THE RELEASE  
OF EZRA POUND FROM ST. ELIZABETH'S:  
Remarks for the 20th Annual International  
Ezra Pound Conference at Sun Valley, Idaho,  
July 3, 2003

Fifty-one years ago, when I was a nineteen-year-old college student at Eastern Oregon University (then College), fresh from the farm and, save for Frost and Eliot's "Prufrock," unaware of any Twentieth Century poets or their work, I approached my first Christmas break. One could take as many as ten books from the library for the vacation period. I approached the new and un-catalogued cart, which was included "fair game." The tenth book I slid from the cart was a slender little thing called *The Pisan Cantos*.

I had never heard of Pound, but the first line, "The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders," froze me in my tracks. It still does. In essence, it changed my life's course forever. Of course I would not change my tenth pick, even when my favorite English professor tried to dissuade me from spending time with a poet deeply in trouble with the law and one said to be "not only difficult—but extremely eccentric."

Being a baby of the Great Depression and resultant family bankruptcy forcing us back to the land for survival, of course, like everyone else, I identified with the underdog; the downtrodden—and like many had been deeply moved by Jean-Francois Millet's "The Man with The Hoe," of which there were reprints in very many public schoolrooms. There was much to identify with.

It is not surprising that in the several years after the first acquaintance with Pound's work—reading more of and about Pound—I joined in the spirit of the many who bridled at the thought of his being confined for so long at St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

Pound said in Canto 9, "To maintain a liquidity . . . / begin at the precinct level." That had special appeal to me. From about age eleven I had been completely entranced by the possibilities inherent in politics in a democracy,

convinced then, as I remain now, that one individual can, if things break right, make a significant difference in this world.

In college in the fifties, I became a very active liberal Young Republican under the sway of U.S. Senator Wayne Morse, Rep. Tom McCall, and the young Mark Hatfield and still younger Clay Meyers. I knew them all and I pounded the pavement for them. They and their politics reminded me of E.P.'s grandfather, Congressman Thaddeus Coleman Pound of Wisconsin. But it was not lost on me that there were negatives, as when I ran for delegate and the right wing Republicans, some good friends, deserted me and it was my Jewish, Socialist colleague, Henry Baich, who stepped in and helped me stuff campaign envelopes until 3 a.m.

I lost my delegate race but was appointed to the Republican National Convention delegation as his alternate by Oregon State Senate majority leader Rudy Wilhelm, Jr.

That same year, in August, 1956, three days after receiving my Master's Degree, I was drafted into the Army. After sixteen weeks of Infantry basic training, it was off to Iceland on a machine-gun squad of the Second Battalion Combat Team. Then, and in basic, remembering some Pound and Eliot helped keep the keel somewhat even: "Sing we for love and idleness, / Naught else is worth the having. / Though I have been in many a land, / There is naught else in living. / And I would rather have my sweet, / Though rose-leaves die of grieving, / Than do high deeds in Hungary / To pass all men's believing." E.P.'s "An Immortality." And just then the Russians were flaying the Hungarians who were fighting for their freedom, and Hungary was a most apt focus, since World War III might erupt at any time.

As we know, it didn't. But, Hank Baich often sent me clippings from the British and European press—filled with concern that America's most influential poet remained locked up in St. Elizabeth's Hospital. That, and my relatively isolated state, melded to fan the flames of indignation at, to say the least, the indignity of it all: All, including Pound, The United States, and The Republic of Letters.

At last we focus on "The Mystery Senator."

As fate would have it, save for Sig Unander, Oregon State Treasurer, every major office in that state had been won by Democrats that year. U.S. senator Guy Cordon lost to State Senator Richard L. Neuberger by something like one percent of the vote. Now, I had worked hard for Cordon, though I greatly respected Neuberger. Neuberger's campaign manager had been my close friend and co-religionist John G. Jones, a neighbor of mine in LaGrande, Oregon, who himself had lost a Congressional race two years earlier. (Neuberger subsequently named John his administrative assistant.)

A light bulb went off in my head—as in the cartoons. It hit me that if anyone in the U.S. Congress could really help the effort to gain Pound's release, it would be highly effective if that legislator were a Democrat—since E.P. was often accused of being a rightist. But if that legislator were also Jewish it should supply a tremendous boost. Dick Neuberger fit both descriptions and, in addition, was one of the only—if not the only—man of letters in the U.S. Senate, except, perhaps Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, a noted art collector and critic.

It was a shot in the dark, demanding to be taken. I wrote at length to Senator Neuberger, addressing Pound's situation and urging some action.

The Senator wrote me that he would look into the case. Then, silence ensued: many weeks of it. I fretted myself into a dreadful stew and wrote the Senator a scathing letter, assaulting his apparent indifference. Thank God I didn't mail it, deciding to wait out the week. At the very next mail call a several page letter arrived from John Jones, Neuberger's administrative assistant, saying that the Senator had put the investigation in his charge and that action had begun on the Congressional front. Senator Neuberger and North Dakota Congressman Usher Burdick, a Liberal Republican, had taken measures to investigate the case, and H.A. (Hal) Sieber, Senior Research Assistant of The Library of Congress had been assigned to prepare a definitive report on Pound's incarceration. In many ways, the rest is history that we all are aware of. Hal Sieber's meticulous, hands-on research produced the now-famous document called "The Medical, Legal, Literary and Political Status of Ezra Weston (Loomis) Pound—Selected Facts and Comments." It was dated



March 31, 1958 and revised April 14, 1958. (See *Congressional Record*, Appendix A-4527, May 13, 1958.) Quite properly it has been known as "The Sieber Report." As you know, it was read into *The Congressional Record* by Congressman Burdick and was widely quoted by Robert Frost and other men and women of letters and of law in the proceedings that ultimately saw Pound's release from St. Elizabeth's.

Several years later, while I was doing doctoral study at The University of Pennsylvania, it struck me yet again what a wonderful story of Democracy at work in America it was—especially on the heels of the Joe McCarthy Era. And some of my friends from Army days, people like Sid Smolensky, Paul Budin, and Al Schulman, Jewish friends who had nicknamed me "Ezron" in Iceland when I was constantly quoting E.P., and who had come to admire much of his poetry, egged me on. So finally I wrote an article, which I yearned to see in a major magazine because of what I conceived to be its deeply patriotic message.

I then wrote Senator Neuberger about it. Earlier he had made it known that the less said about his part in Pound's liberation the better. It was pretty clear that he feared that some powerful, moneyed interests who were Pound-haters might support opposition to him in the Primary and/or General election—and given his slim margin of victory six years earlier, this was highly understandable.

This time, however, his tone had changed entirely. He said it was fine with him if the article were published—including mention of his major role in Pound's release. He said he would love to see the article but that he wouldn't presume to change a word. He was appreciative that I had said I'd like to work for his re-election as a "card-carrying Republican," or any other way that might be helpful—and he invited me to train down to Washington for a "bowl of bean soup," at the Senate dining room, when he returned from Christmas break in Oregon.

The Senator died in Oregon during Christmas vacation. Cancer.

Naturally I felt even more compelled to tell this great American story. I wrote to his widow, Maureen, who had been elected to his seat, short term, and would become a candidate for the next full, six-year term. I enclosed the manuscript, which Dick had wanted to see.

Instead of the anticipated warm reception, Mrs. Neuberger hotly replied that my facts were wrong. Dick really had had no role in the matter: it was all Burdick—and besides, my writing was shoddy.

I am sure that, in my hurt and anger, I tore that letter up. I didn't send the essay out. You don't wage wars with widows, right or wrong, as a rule. What I did do was give the few papers directly concerned to Harvard, so that they could be near Maureen and her second husband, who was from Cambridge.

This anecdotal report can be substantiated in the Harvard Pound papers and other archives at The University of North Carolina, and in the Pound holdings at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in North Carolina—at which a Pound Archive was created just last year when Hal Sieber, who now edits *The Peacemaker* newspaper in Greensboro, generously donated his entire Pound Case collection there. I might add that the late James Laughlin, E.P.'s publisher, knew of it all, although I don't know if he kept any written records of our conversations.

"Small birds sing in chorus," Pound said. Indeed they do. Indeed they do. Full circle, then, back to "The Man with The Hoe" and to the words of United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld on October 19, 1954:

Modern art teaches us to see by forcing us to use our senses, our intellect, and our sensibility to follow it on its road of exploration. It makes us seers—seers like Ezra Pound, when in the first of his *Pisan Cantos* he senses "The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders." Seers and explorers—these we must be if we are to prevail.

Certainly Hal Sieber, John G. Jones, Usher Burdick, and Richard L. Neuberger are of that noble band.

*Ron Bayes*

☞ MOSS

If grass is earth's hair  
then this is earth's  
                    secret armpit and  
            groin—  
fleeced and feathered  
where musk and dew

augur wind-blown shade

where maleness draws into dirt  
                    and roots tingle  
with animosity and grace

Forbidden adhesiveness and merge

            The hair of lovers

*Jeffery Beam*

⌘ DEMETER TO HECATE

A heart unbroken cannot hold that which cannot be known  
Tears fallen unclaimed will not leave you alone  
Then alone welcomes you into its whole and populous vacancy

Blue does not blue unless you have been where you would not go  
And, when you look with eyes that dare not seeing  
You hear rain  
And stars popping wildly in the whiteless night

*Jeffery Beam*

WALKING ON APPLES

You think you know how it will be  
smooth and crunchy unlike  
a brain  
Without ecstasy and with  
much derision  
the dull  
thuds dropping  
round you in the tall  
grass                      The bees  
serenade

Instead  
a lemon odor  
from the dying bellies  
A narrow track trampled  
in the grass  
leading to the woods  
up which nightly  
a solitary small beast comes  
to take with hunger  
and no greed  
the rounded vapors left by wasp  
and beetle

*Jeffery Beam*



## CONVERSATION

As night's burnt purple eyes smolder and blink,  
streaked rain steams up from the hot evening lights  
that flicker on at dark. (Two winking  
moths powder the black fog, fire-blind.) "Nice night."

"I suppose." Your cigarette sends red  
nicotine fingers under my sweated  
skin. "What are you thinking?" "Nothing." A dead  
branch strips, throwing undone leaves into naked

orange alarm. Beneath the lips of the broken  
awning, silver-wet webs bleed dew. You hold  
out the pack. "Do you want another smoke?"  
"Not now, no." You nod and move closer, cold.

(A wing glances off the yellow street lamp, explodes.)

*Chrystalene Buhler*

## ⌘ THE CORE OF MEMORY

The ripe bastard child blooms to fill her hot  
unwed womb, stretching and tugging in time to  
the jerking bus. She feels a sharp kick and  
blushes, as though Catholic eyes could strip her  
skin to bone, slicing shell from flesh like the  
man peeling an apple in the first row.

The man peeling an apple in the first row  
curses the bus when his knife slips, and hot  
red drops stain the white fruit. "Damn this bus, the  
bloody traffic," he mutters rudely to  
no one. A woman and a small child, their  
cheeks ruddy with cold, get on the bus and

sit down. "Mommy, I want an apple. And  
a story." The child stands in the row  
and starts to howl. The woman ignores it,  
her mind curling inward around the hot  
bright steel of "I'm leaving you," holding it to  
her throat, testing its edge on her skin. The

Catholic woman, en route to mass, gives the  
child a piece of homemade toffee and  
begins to read the ads on the bus to  
distract it. A poem above the fourth row  
sings of nuns peeling apples. The hot  
sticky child smiles, and the woman moves her

hand to her stomach unconsciously, her  
fingers feeling for an absent pulse. The  
Catholic husband is groping the hot  
redhead with imaginary hands and  
wishing his wife wouldn't make a scene. Rows  
back, the redhead dreams, oblivious to

the impotent touch of Catholic men, to  
the jerking bus and the sticky child. Her  
eyes are wet apple blossoms, under rows  
of trees, unskinned, a blanket of blossoms, the  
red echoes of his touch burgeoning and  
blooming at the core of memory, hot.

The fetus has no memories of apples, hot  
and white, only of the dark heat of her  
core, the heart that blooms and bleeds red roses.

*Chrystalene Buhler*



⌘ what she was wearing

*this is my suicide dress  
she told him  
I only wear it on days  
when I'm afraid  
I might kill myself  
if I don't wear it*

*you've been wearing it  
every day since we met  
he said*

*and these are my arson gloves  
  
so you don't set fire to something?  
he asked*

*exactly  
and this is my terrorism lipstick  
my assault and battery eyeliner  
my armed robbery boots*

*I'd like to undress you he said  
but would that make me an accomplice?*

*and today she said I'm wearing  
my infidelity underwear  
so don't get any ideas*

*and she put on her nervous breakdown hat  
and walked out the door*

*Denver Butson*

afe

birdcage  
ribcage  
bridge  
bride  
bird  
rid  
id  
i  
i'd  
die  
dire  
dirge  
bridge  
ribcage  
birdcage

*Denver Butson*

## ☿ THE FIRST LAST TIME

The day my heart stopped beating  
we sat in your hallway half-naked and half crazy  
at the Intersection of Indecision  
both wanting to bury our heads in the quicksand of all that we knew  
perfectly willing to wallow in the comfort of dysfunction  
in order to evade the finality of separation

Knowing that loss would bring ache and tears  
we silently wished for years beneath our wings  
but the months glared from beneath the dried grass  
and we saw Truth's abscess with new eyes  
It was not hard to diagnose the symptoms

Still we would not go.

My hands played our song on the buttons of your blouse  
as you kept time  
shifting so that in the quiet of space  
I could hear your skin  
breathing familiar lyrics  
as the magnets in our bodies realigned us,  
prepared us for orbit

My mouth found yours again  
and sealed off conversations of goodbye  
behind locked lips  
our tongues would rather dance  
than be carriers of sharp sentences

Grinding the rhythm between our teeth  
we bit down hard on love  
and swallowed our questions  
mumbled apologies  
and stumbled over clothing sprawled like fallen soldiers  
The only enemy now was the matter of inches between us

And before I even knew whose lips broke promise  
I felt the tearing of shrapnel at my abdomen  
Glanced to see grenade pin on your ring finger  
My mouth agape frozen in mid-scream.

*Okeitho Carey*

☞ and these are of them

these are voices bubbling are  
voices bubbling and breaking there is  
a breaking up and there is a breaking  
down there is a bad connection the voices  
bubble out and break up the lines  
have bubbles and these are of them the  
wires have bubbles that are voices and these  
break up badly on this first night arriving this  
is a bad connection tongues are speaking  
through each pin prick hole of the earpiece a  
tongue speaks detached from body head and  
sense these tongues these bubbles detach they  
break up badly on this first night arriving  
detached it may be that these tongues  
are speaking the past that the voices of  
the past all at once are speaking all at  
once that the past has bubbles and these are  
of them that the past detaches easily and just  
like that . . .

*Joel Chace*

✿ "MURMURING BITS": RON BAYES' UMAPINE  
BOOKS

In Atlanta in October 1983 I heard a poetry performance by William Harmon which was a revelation unto me, and also, I shall hope, to the faithful two score or so of other listeners in the room. Maestro Harmon hardly "read" any poems at all, but rendered a seemingly impromptu monologue all prickly with jokes, puns, anecdotes, drifts musings, quotations from sources high and low, parodies, complaints, and personal asides. Now and again he would threaten to read a poem and then fail to do so, or would ease into and out of a poem without alerting us that that's what it was.

I thought: Now this is very odd!

And I thought: Why does this performance remind me of Ron Bayes' books?

Then I thought: Well, Fred, you dope, that's the point.

One of those matters you pretend to understand in some intellectual fashion but never expect to see demonstrated:

Poetry not merely as a figuration of words upon a page but as an attitude, a continual reception and transmission, experience relentlessly becoming poetry because the poet's mind is trained to perceive and express every scrap of raw material as poetry, a wide wild net nylon-strong and gossamer-light which nothing escapes. A prosy kind of poetry which does not attempt to approach the speech of ordinary men but rather to approximate the thought processes of extraordinary minds, "one of those upon whom nothing is lost."

A music large enough in concept to absorb any random noise and transfigure it to musical design. As per ambitions of Charles Ives and John Cage.

Anyhow, it was during this playful performance by William Harmon that I began to appreciate more finely the work of Ronald H. Bayes.

2.

*Appreciate*, I say; I do not say *understand*.

If I've got it right, one does not "understand" this sort of poetry in the way he is allowed to "understand" poetry by Donne or Browning or Frost. When I first thought of writing about Bayes' work I expected to do so in the old trite-and-rue grad school fashion. Find the overall design, list the major themes and motifs, harrow the thumbworn encyclopedias and mythological handbooks. You come up with a respectable-looking article called "The Influence of Vico's Homeric Sociology on Bayes' Umapine Tetralogy." Rococo garlands of footnotes, accentuated with splashes of Greek. Search out a mythological figure the poet seems to identify himself with (here it might well be Actaeon) and ride both the hapless blokes to staggers.

Then you tell the world you have written something *definitive*, hot damn. Isn't it wonderful how swiftly Pegasus takes the bit?

Well, that sort of thing doesn't hurt the poem; nothing will do the poem harm but neglect and/or disappearance. But in this case such reference-mongering seems to have a special irrelevance. The cultural referents in the Umapine books—and they are legion—are not concepts and names that the poet has deliberately sought in order to illuminate or enhance his meanings, but terms that he can no longer help thinking in.

That makes all the difference. The Umapine poems are not a finished product that a reader works backward from, but are instead a frame of mind, a way of thinking, that he tries to catch up with as soon as possible. Perhaps the first impression an innocent reader—if there are any of that sort left alive—might come by is that he is three Scotches behind.

3.

It's not a new thing under the sun. Olson's *Maximus* is much like Umapine, and Zukofsky's *A*, Williams' *Paterson*, Bunting's *Briggflats*. So, to some extent, are

Crane's *The Bridge*, Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and of course inevitably and always Pound's *Cantos*.

But these poems are already respectable ancestors by the time we get to Bayes. Their arms, designs, and methods are so thoroughly taken for granted that the whole quality is thought of merely as an idiom. You wanna write a poem? The methods of collage, cultural overlay, fragmented impulse are now as available and as firmly established as, say, blank verse or rhymed quatrains. The fact of the loose, broken, and highly allusive form has long ceased to matter. The important thing is the sensibility the poet brings to this accepted form.

Which is also true of blank verse and rhymed quatrains, but not more true.

What's most fun is to accost this sensibility, fresh in the idiom it has chosen to speak in, to enjoy the interlacement of sensibility and idiom, of observation and illusion, of High Art and Low (gully-low) Kulch. To meet the poem before the annotators bury it. I don't exactly know how they do it, but the scholarly commentators are able to bury a poem first and embalm it afterward.

4.

Some humdrum facts may or may not be helpful. Like these:

Umapine is some place in Oregon which probably only Bayes' poetry saves from Cimmerian obscurity. The four volumes in the Umapine tetralogy are *History of the Turtle* (1968), *Porpoise* (1969), *Tokyo Annex* (1977), and *Fram* (1978). There is no "plot," no linear progression of events; we simply observe the poet's mind reacting to, commenting upon, current and ancient history, memories, impressions, reading material, and anything else that crosses his mind's-eye line of sight. The poem is full of homages because Bayes, as a warm appreciator, has a large number of personal heroes; there is a partial but longish list of these in *Fram* which includes (predictably) Pound, Williams, Rimbaud, Lorca, and (unpredictably) Dickens, de Gaulle, Lotte Lenya, and Thomas Mann. The poem is full of Joycean puns, even though *Turtle* announces early on that the poet will forswear puns. The poem begins with a train ride out of Chicago and "travel" is one of its



broadest themes, so broad that it amounts to a method of composition.

In fact, many of Bayes' themes actually become compositional methods; that is one advantage of collage form. There are certain recurring leitmotifs and refrains throughout; sometimes they remain stable, often they are transformed by punning or by ironically changed context. Bayes spends a lot of time in airports. "Walking about under trees, murmuring bit of Euripides": a refrain, more or less stable, that shows up frequently; its resemblance to Eliot's famous women talking of Michelangelo is deliberate, an homage, a joke, and a commentary on the sensibility that produces Umapine. Quotations from Euripides are few or none. The important loci of the poem are Europe, the United States, Iceland, Japan, and Mexico. The external shape of Umapine is slender lyric embroidery upon a turgid mass of world cultural history, interspersed with raw samplings of this material in the form of learned quotations, letters, newsclips, TV shows, pop music, vernacular conversations. Bayes, like Pound, enjoys recording some of the more idiotic things U.S. senators say; as in *The Cantos*, this material soon dates itself hopelessly—Bayes' Dirksen is as hard to remember as Pound's Bankhead. The quaint aspect of present time already becoming past time is one of the themes (and methods) of the poem. Three of the four volumes of Umapine have no page numbers, making it extremely awkward to locate passages. An individual section of Umapine is called a passus, but the poem doesn't much resemble *Piers Plowman*. Pound has the knack of obliterating academic demarcations of historical time, he can make a conversation with Yeats sound as if it took place in 344 A.D. in Byzantium; Bayes shows this ability, and it is one of the qualities which makes Umapine read, in its largest context, as an elegy. "Fram" is the name of an oil filter, and *filter* might be one definition of the poem; Bayes probably also intends "Fram" as a made-up preterite of Old English *fremman*, "to make, to shape (a poem)." (The pluperfect would then be *From*). Much of the poem is personal, and there are references not really intended for general audiences to pick up. Who, e.g., is Swaffer? Who is Hammad? Who Al, Asta, Schaumburg, Jack and Mary?

Makes no difference who these folks are, finally, since what they add to the poem (besides funny and/or weird remarks) is the cluttered texture of daily living, random acquaintance. Umapine, despite the fact that it is quite a long poem, is basically reticent; the poet gives away little of his personal life or private thought; he gives us only what his carefully cultivated poetic consciousness registers—I can't decide whether this reticence amounts to good manners or annoying tease. There is a fair batch of political pronouncement, but hard to say what stripe it is. There is a lot of homily, all of it honorable, little of it embarrassing.

Etc etc etc etc etc etc etc.

One could make an infinite catalogue of this sort of remark about the poem, and that would be maybe the best method of criticism: not to try to penetrate Umapine but to surround it with the kinds of observation the poem itself practices.

But let me list a few perceptions the earnest scholars will probably not bother with when they come to examine the work.

1. The speaker of the poem is striving to become a good person; he has despaired of becoming a good citizen.
2. There are a number of "hidden" themes in the word. One is homosexuality; another is pedagogy.
3. Where earlier poets saw raw ignorance and crass indifference as the worst of modern evils. Bayes finds it in physical cruelty, brutal but ordinary. This subject defeats him.
4. Where earlier poets used cosmopolitanism as a criticism of provincialism, Umapine sees the local individual as a victim of tasteless global cosmopolitanism.
5. The great longing in Umapine is not for large civil order and justice but for a defensible personal quietism.
6. The use of foreign languages is not really inherent in Bayes' mentality. Macaronic phases in Umapine are merely ornamental and the poem might be better off without them.

7. The poet's sense of irony (especially of the ironic pun) gives him no rest. It is part of the consciousness he has successfully formed, but it has become something of a Frankenstein's monster and there are times when he would like to be rid of it. Briefly: Bayes wonders if the construction of his poetry has not damaged a central innocence in him.
8. Bayes likes best the purely lyrical passages that most readers will like best. It is his sense of duty that causes him to include the passages of contrasting raw data. He has finally made a wise decision.
9. There are occasional lapses of self-confidence, passages of doubt about the justification of the project. These are unwarranted. Umapine is an interesting and useful work. Engaging . . . It is a characteristic of poems like Umapine—Pound's, Olson's, Williams'—that they spend a large number of lines talking about themselves, about the difficulties of getting themselves written. This is time spent in disarming the reader, an unnecessary ploy.
10. The didactic impulse that drives Pound, Olson, Bunting and the others is shown much more modestly and uncertainly in Bayes. Those poets have a lit of Holy Texts they believe will save civilization if only every man jack of us will get them by heart. Confucius, Mayan codices, the Adams letters—whatever. Bayes has a curriculum too, but it is for enjoyment rather than salvation. One is grateful to him that we don't always have to be saving civilization.

5.

My love, who ever you were,  
not stir.

Be sure  
we are in air  
Precisely there.

(Fram)

Not that Bayes isn't *interested* in saving civilization, if it could be done. "yet / *Amerika*, 1963: / the farting plastic mustard bottle/ sets the theme." These lines and the scores of others like them are not written by a complacent person. Vulgarity, raw greed, mindless journalism, bubblegum politics, and proud ignorance are not things the poet admires. But he doesn't use them as pretexts to maunder in lightless despair. He finds a gleam of hope in the very pervasiveness of popular culture. The stanza continues: "The unity IS here—town, metrop, village-in-the-sticks: /we are one, / & our efficiency is notable." (*Turtle*.)

This notable efficiency keeps an immense population physically alive, and that is perhaps a good thing. That it keeps them spiritually alive is not a feasible proposition. The lovely old culture that brought this savage new one into being is deeply moribund; even Lady Gregory's Coole Park is dying from it. "Her tree carved in by every pimple faced hardon in the county. / The swans long / gone." One reason that many ingenious lovely things are gone is that they no longer seem sheer miracle to the multitude; the multitude is absorbed in the miracle of itself, everyone is able to feel himself securely and amazedly part of a mob. Even if it turns out to be a lynch mob, he can be confident of finding congenial company in it. *Mon semblable—mon frere . . .*

Not exactly a happy situation, and one that makes Umapine even more than the *Cantos*, the poem of the Outcast Wanderer. The poet visits nation and nation, metropolis after metropolis, as the dark unbidden guest, the seeker whose obscure but genuine quest leads him to observe everywhere the tribes in their industrial agonies treating one another with shopworn indifferent brutality.

Which is precisely why so much of the poem is given over to celebration of beauty, friendship, quiet thought, courageous thinkers, simplicity, and—yes—holiness. These are the respites, the refreshment, the Wanderer has found along his journey. He has found much love too, though it never gives him a lasting happiness. He has kept, however shakily, a faith that somewhere within, or past the mass of,

the detritus of the contemporary disaster the genuine and the holy still endure. "All of the shit at the foot of Fuji," I said . . . / What you gotta wade through to / get to God." (*Fram.*) That's a funny, sad, and distinctly modern observation, but not one that John Bunyan's Pilgrim would disagree with.

My point here, though, is that this persona, poet as Outcast Wanderer, is not an image of self-pity or frustrated anger or loner for immortal fame. This persona, the man of no fortune and with a name to come, is a figure necessarily created when the poet has made his sensibility an all-inclusive register of cultural phenomena. Once the poet has constructed this mechanism, once he has tested and attuned its sensitivities, then he has to feed it material to register, to weigh and compare and judge. So he sends it out journeying in the world, looking at one nation and another, this polis and that. The goal of its quest is not so definite as the Holy Grail or the kiss of Brunhilde; the goal is only to see and hear and taste distinctions, to gain a kind of comparative knowledge of how things are, moment to moment at this place and the other. The method of the quest, the schedule of wandering, is aleatory, firmly determined at random because only random samplings are admissible evidence. The Umapine poet goes to Iceland and Japan, but he could as easily have gone to Singapore and Rhode Island. His largest conclusions would be the same, but the flavors of the poem would be importantly different.

A discouraging fact results. The poem can be stopped or abandoned or left open-ended (as Umapine is), but it can never be a completed design. The world has an infinite amount of material to pour upon this sensibility, and once the sensibility is in working order it is able to deal, in its own special limited way, with all of it. *The Cantos* is incomplete, and the Maximus poems, and *Paterson*, etc., etc. Crane could easily have added more sections to *The Bridge*, etc. Of all the great travel poems only Dante's is complete and—really!—you have to be kind of sappy to think of the *Commedia* as a travel poem.

Although the overall design of Umapine is not memorable, and perhaps

discernable only to the poet, the experience of reading the poem as a whole is memorable indeed. A mode of perceiving, "a way of happening," remains in the mind and informs one's most ordinary daily experience. This mode of perception wears off in a little time, as all artistic encounter seems to do, but who can say how deeply it has sunk in, how much it has become ineluctable?

7.

Not that the faults are there  
Not how the faults got there  
Not how you learn to live with faults  
But how you live with them

Not to change person  
But realize person  
Live with that person  
Wedded.

*(Tokyo Annex)*

Silly as I am, I'm not silly enough to try to make some final critical estimate of Umapine, and I would dread to meet the literary stockbroker who does attempt this sort of thing. When the new poetic idiom, the one Umapine employs, was created in this century, it rejuvenated Wordsworth's notion of literature as an immense cathedral toward whose design every poet contributes. The idiom, established mostly by Whitman and Pound and Eliot in English, is so wildly democratic that all the large-scale efforts seem to include one another.

That is, Umapine could be thought of as an "annex" to *The Cantos*, and *The Cantos* thought of as a nave crossed by the transept of *Paterson*, and so forth. Pound, Bunting, Olson, Bayes, et al., have collaborated upon an enormous multi-volume picaresque novel in verse whose hero is THAT sensibility and whose narrative is the story of its adventures. It is not an epic, not even by Pound's definition of epic as a poem containing history, because the form is too open to contain anything. It can exhibit an endless variety of history but it cannot contain it (in the way that the *Aeneid*, say, and *Pharsalia* "contain" Roman history) because containment violates the essential method which makes the poems possible.

Bayes, in choosing that specific idiom, has chosen to add to that single enormous edifice. It is an act of pride as well as one of homage.

The fact I can attest to is that he has held up his end of the collaboration, has written honestly, earnestly, gracefully, and thoughtfully. He has contributed individual character and new materials to his part in the endeavor, and he shall receive more honor for his work than I have been able to give him here. That gargantuan edifice has grown not only larger but also stronger because of his labors.

Fragments of mind these  
 cages & journeys  
 carry encounters  
 maybe a moment  
 of loves & friends  
 Time telescopes  
 indeed the same.  
 & in what season Attic rain?  
 Cages & / journeys? Ends?

(Turtle)

THE UMAPINE TETRALOGY

*History of The Turtle*, Olivant Press, 1970, \$15 (o.p.)

*Porpoise*, Bed Clay Press, 1972, \$14 (o.p.)

*Tokyo Annex*, St. Andrews Press, 1977 (Laurinburg, NC 28352), \$4.95

*Fram*, Pynyon Press, 74 13th Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30309, 1979, \$8.00

*Fred Chappell*



✿ Courtship of the Self

The best betrothal  
the mattering enchantment  
is this one  
the beguiled me

today I take tea with  
endearing company  
apportion my own dowry  
plan the enduring trousseau

life's bigger troth is lonely  
this seduction goes the course  
a flirtation of consequence  
reflexive bedazzle

*Tricia Cherin*

## ✿ Singing Lessons

I want to sing lullabies  
to my grandchildren  
pretend there's comfort in practiced tones

as is the larynx grates  
and I am told that all  
is a matter of training  
breathing and timbre can be coached

cover my nose she says  
close my eyes and hum  
hear the resonance  
inside my head

already are words and thoughts  
and even syntax  
waiting to be summoned  
now notes will be there

I do the scales on mi ma mo  
hold la for the countdown  
my vowels are round  
if not my life

torch singing may have to wait  
for a different incarnation  
although you never know  
what's hot in the rest home

if I master the Brahms and Bye, Baby Bunting  
I may start in on death laments  
many dear to me are getting on in years

I would like to do a decent requiem  
prepare for the coming dirges  
a more melodious keening

*Tricia Cherin*

## ❧ Winter Beach

Kelp as thick around  
as a giant's femur  
against a golden gourd  
like a knuckle  
and sea grass  
newly wrenched

the fog horn moans in steady wails  
soprano on bass clef  
historied grief

a pelican flies  
against the crescent moon  
on the threshold of  
more than itself

just for this moment: beauty

*Tricia Cherin*

## ☯ In the Sauna at the Gym

Cambodian ladies chat in truncated syllables  
in a language I don't know  
the sound is green like tangled ferns

I feel its affects, the intensities  
of amusement, lulling and retort  
the pores inside me open  
take in the lush phonemes

we lie on hot wood planks  
with grandmother bare breasts  
talk sweats  
and enters us  
a wordy and sybaritic communion

*Tricia Cherin*

## ☿ Talk Dammit

were the sole words in  
the suicide note, the last  
syllables scrawled  
by Claudia's father  
before his brains blew out

this may be a better homily  
than any in Matthew or Mark  
or any Self Help  
ballyhoo

we must babble, gossip,  
grunt, proclaim,  
advise, intimate,  
exhort, inveigle, wail

as wiseasses or humble sayers  
in explicit or secret rhetoric  
through rotted teeth  
or Kennedy smiles

in stream-of-consciousness  
or periodic punch  
in mellifluous meanderings  
or monosyllabic bursts

bombastically or efficiently  
in bars or boutiques  
in mosques or madhouses  
we must  
talk dammit

*Tricia Cherin*

☯ OBSERVATIONS ON A LOST DAY

Magnolia leaves melt into mulch  
Green grass glows under my gaze  
Pine needles pollute the perimeter  
Meaningless mist lays marks on me  
Racing raindrops make roots all 'round  
Laughing lightning lashes out loud  
(Accompanied by thunder from the big dark cloud)  
Dancing drops dissolve the day.

We watch the weather and wonder why  
The damn dark clouds don't drip tonight.

*Colin Christopher*

## ✿ BUS RIDE

Everyday, the tram bus  
arrives to haul us to and from  
our abandoned vehicles.

A herd of students  
stumbles on-board,  
exceeding the suggested  
capacity. The ride is short,  
yet it often feels like forever  
since we are forced to travel  
on so many. The hills of San  
Marcos are tough and refuse  
to spare my legs from constant  
flex. The struggling engine  
would agree.

As we are all rolling along,  
it seems I'm the only one  
using force, and at times,  
everything I have,  
to keep myself from  
giving in to the bumpy ride—  
it is doing its best to throw  
me in all sorts of different  
directions. The other passengers,  
riding smoothly, seem at ease.  
Some talk to one another;  
conversation to avoid thought  
and pass the time. They  
have enough to worry about.



Others, in a trance, appear  
to be reciting the duties of  
their everyday. I'm alone  
in my observance. The one  
painfully finding ways  
to reject the hills of the  
repetitive route.

*Chris Cooke*

✿ FIREFLIES

Fireflies randomly illuminate  
this cool mid-summer night.  
Grown now, in a new world of  
facts, I refuse to accept the  
science of their glow. I still  
choose magic as the most  
rational answer since

with each spark of light,  
I'm transformed  
again. Lifted out of  
my lawn chair, I'm carried  
to another time.

A time when every evening,  
my sisters and I would race  
down our backyard; whoever  
took first place won  
nothing, except the prize  
of being the first one  
to laugh.

*Chris Cooke*

✿ PEAR TREE PANTOUM

From my window I saw my neighbor's pear tree  
covered in white blossoms. I thought it was snow.  
When snow covered the pear tree's branches, I thought  
I saw white petals unfold from buds of ice

covered in white blossoms. I thought it was snow.  
When wind scattered snow from the pear tree's branches,  
I saw white petals unfold from buds of ice.  
Ivory petals drifted by my window.

When wind scattered snow from the pear tree's branches,  
floating like glitter in a shaken snowdome,  
ivory petals drifted by my window.  
Star-white flowers shivered in a blurred season,

floating like glitter in a shaken snowdome.  
From my window, stamens froze in a frame as  
star-white flowers shivered in a blurred season  
of frost and inflorescence, blizzard and bloom.

From my window, stamens froze in a frame. As  
the seam between seasons curved into a lens  
of frost and inflorescence, blizzard and bloom,  
I thought I was seeing double, believing

the seam between seasons curved into a lens  
clouded with breath. Was it spring? Was it winter?  
I thought I was seeing double, believing  
snow was falling as seafoam-white buds opened,

clouded with breath. It was spring. It was winter  
when snow covered the pear tree's branches. I thought  
snow was falling as seafoam-white buds opened.  
I saw my neighbor's pear tree from my window.

*Beth Copeland*

## ☞ Need

St. Petersburg, Russia

I have been thinking how the body  
is a vulture—all avarice and need.  
How longing creeps up, stalking  
for days, catches with such force  
it leaves you breathless.  
It doesn't matter witnesses remain  
offering explanation.

One month since I arrived  
in this city of water and fading light  
where the wind slaps between decrepit  
palaces lining the canals and everyone  
eats ice cream even on the coldest days.

It's true I can get by now.  
The bakery clerks no longer  
call out counter-lady to cashier  
(louder than necessary)  
as if poor language skills  
were a handicap like deafness.  
Maybe they're right;  
it's easier to swallow  
the sentences than to pull  
them out like an old rag  
caught in the gullet of a heron.

If taste on the tongue  
cannot be verbalized

how can a woman differentiate  
between dozens of pickles  
displayed at Kuznetchny Market,  
the purveyors chanting  
*Try this. Sweet. Crunchy.*  
All you could hope for.

On the line, calls disconnect,  
not from politics but a wire system  
so shabby laughter vanishes  
as it's vocalized.

I tell my husband  
*The weather is getting cold. I am fine.*  
Does he believe me? He shouldn't.  
Later on the street as I wait  
for my children, my gaze drifts  
to a pair of lovers and settles there  
perhaps too comfortably  
while the body begins a low dirge:  
*I need. I need.*

*Carol V. Davis*

## ☞ The Gargoyle Rides the Metro

You can guess the weather from the faces of the pedestrians.  
When the wind chases around corners bullying its way  
even through the thickest of fur coats, the mouth sets  
in resignation and the eyes lose all imagination.

With limbs of stone it is easy to think the gargoyle is immune  
to the cold, but he is not. And like the drunks and beggars,  
anyone who has any sense left, he enters the Metro; not invisible,  
just unnoticed by people fixated on warmth and the search  
for a few rubles to buy bread.

Mayakovsky station is lined with red tiles covered by a silver sheen.  
The jaw of its namesake protrudes in revolutionary defiance.  
Car doors open and a mass of people push in with the urgency  
of crossing the Red Sea to escape the advancing Egyptian Army.

The gargoyle jumps on a drunk's shoulder, as the doors slam shut.  
A voice announces Nevsky Prospekt and a gypsy girl crosses from  
one car to the next banging the sliding door behind her, calling out  
a blessing to no one in particular, followed by a low plea. Eyes overt;  
no passenger willing to part with a single kopeck for the barefoot girl.

The gargoyle slides into a bag on the seat layered with cabbages  
and onions in time to be carried up the steep escalator by an old  
woman dragged close to the ground by her burden. In front of her  
two navy boys joke and laugh. A slap of wind pushes them back  
as they lean against the station door, exiting onto the busy street.

With a graceful leap the gargoyle lands on the rooftop of Gostiny Dvor, the city's largest store. Small piles of snow surround him like meringues around a floating centerpiece. He perches on his haunches surveying the landmarks: Church of the Spilt Blood, a statue of Catherine the Great.

This is his city; he can identify all of it. But on Pushkin St. a building is oddly scarred, where the gargoyle tore himself from his perch. The cornerstone frayed like a worn vestment, while on the street below, dust and bits of stone recreate themselves into his image, waiting too to come alive.

*Carol V. Davis*



## ☿ Tungsten

They are ready to doctor  
the mountains now:  
earth-pyramids on the brink  
of turning into sand dunes.  
Fossil bird's head,  
a cherry stone in the beak,  
fish-bones and nautili shells  
testify the sea reached high.  
The flanks of my old Mother  
Mountain crumble and shingle  
tumbles into the ravine,  
tarmac covers what was road,  
the ways are dead  
and the hedges gray with dust  
and weariness, buds appear  
because they must,  
yet joy and color less.  
Spring that was always  
round the corner seems  
to come no more, a black bird  
nearby crows: "nevermore!"  
as we shiver on the brink  
of yet another World War.

*Mary deRachewiltz*

☞ Ezra Pound and Cathay:

What Purpose an East-West Bridge???

for Hugh Kenner

"Why write what I can translate out of the Renaissance Latin  
or crib from the sainted dead?

Here are a list of facts on which I and 9,000,000 other  
poets have spieled endlessly:

1. Spring is a pleasant season. The flowers, etc. etc. sprout,  
bloom etc. etc.
2. Young man's fancy. Lightly, heavily, gaily etc. etc.
3. Love, a delightful tickling. Indefinable etc.
4. Tress, hills etc. are by a provident nature arranged diversely,  
in diverse places.
5. Winds, clouds, rains, etc. flop thru and over'em
6. Men love women. (More poetic in singular, but the  
verb retains the same form.)

.....

... in the above 6 groups I think you find the bulk of the  
poetic matter of the ages. Wait—

7. Men fight battles etc. etc.
8. Men go on voyages. (1)"

So wrote the twenty-two year old Ezra Pound marking his boredom with universal  
themes and not enough "making it new." Yet the depiction of *common* experience  
is, by necessity, a key method that allows the audience to *relate* to the artist's  
work. Through technique, an artist builds a bridge allowing the transmission of  
ideas from artist to audience; poet to reader.

\*\*\*

In 1915 Ezra Pound published *Cathay*, a small collection of poems translated from Chinese originals dating from 1100 B.C to 762 A.D. Pound constructed a masterful bridge, spanning not only East to West but across millennia, allowing the poets of ancient China to communicate to a modern western audience. What has the nature of Pound's "bridge"?

Ernest Fenollosa, Harvard graduate, professor of philosophy and curator of the Imperial Museum of Japan, was instrumental in introducing the arts of the Far East into the US. In 1901, while living in Japan, he began, with the help of various Japanese professors, to collect various poems in Chinese and translate them word for word, first into Japanese, then into broken English, following which Fenollosa usually summarized the line into recognizable English syntax; giving a Western format to the unfamiliar Chinese syntax of the original line. Thus Fenollosa's notebooks took the following format:

Line 1: [the original line of poetry in Chinese which, for the sake of convenience, I have omitted]

Line 2: beneath each Chinese character, the Japanese phonetic translation:  
sei   zan   o   hoku   kaku

Line 3: beneath this, the broken English translation, such as:  
Blue   mountain   lie   horizontally   north   side of a walled city

Line 4: then a summary in conventional English syntax:  
Where blue mountain peaks are visible toward the northern suburb (2)

Which Pound rewrote as:

Blue mountains to the north of the wall (3)

Fenollosa died in 1908 and, after meeting Pound at a London party in 1913, his widow gave to Pound all her husband's notebooks containing translations to over 150 Chinese poems. In 1915, Pound published *Cathay*, a selection of only fourteen poems rewritten from the Fenollosa notebooks to which four more were added in his later collection of poems, *Lustra*, of 1916. *Cathay* nowadays is generally taken to consist of all eighteen titles.

Many scholars have elucidated, and debated the various techniques Pound utilized in constructing *Cathay* allowing us to travel East. (4) Undoubtedly the most important girder in this bridge, simply enough, is Pound's abundant inclusion of recognizably Chinese proper nouns (Chokan, Cho-Fu-Sa, Wild-Goose gate, Dragon-pen, Dynastic house, Sennin, Mongo, etc.) and nouns (bamboo, courtesan, jade, plum-blossoms, etc.) for it is these compared to the corresponding pages of the Fenollosa notebooks (5) one realizes that, with the exception of only two proper nouns, (6) *all* of the Chinese indicators in *Cathay* originate from Fenollosa's translations and thus, by choice, retained by Pound.

Another bridge building effort is noted by Barry Ahearn, (7) where Pound chooses to illustrate a stereotypically Asian gesture. In 'Taking Leave of a Friend' Pound uses the phrase, "Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance," an action that we still associate with Chinese greetings or departures. This gesture was *not* illustrated as such in the Fenollosa notebooks but was represented as,

shaking/brandishing hands from this place away

Wringing hands in despairing resolution from this place  
it is away! (8)

Pound adds to the bridge spanning East to West, as Wai-Lim Yip notes, by deviating from familiar English syntax yet *not* maintaining the original Chinese syntax. (9) Pound created something new by achieving a balance between making *Cathay* feel Chinese while still serving the needs of English readers at that time, still dining on the Victorian or Wordsworthian tongue. Chinese syntax is structured to often give the reader a collage of nouns and adjectives, leaving the reader with a montage, the art of juxtaposing film clips close to or superimposed upon one another in order to *impress* a notion onto the viewer. As a well known example, Fenollosa translates this line:

surprised    desert, sand-sea    turmoil    sea    sun

(Fenollosa seems not to have written an English summary line here) (10)

which Pound rewrites as:

Surprised. Desert turmoil. Sea sun. (11)

Again, it must be pointed out that Pound's line does not adhere to the original Chinese syntax, yet the line clearly works. And this, compared to other Chinese translations of the time, was the artistic breakthrough: a new way of representing Chinese poetry. A new type of East West bridge. What gives *Cathay* that subtle Oriental flavour is the simplistic manner which Pound gives each image. These lines are indeed English yet at the same time, not:

Light rain is on the light dust

\*\*\*

Blue mountains to the north of the wall  
White river winding about them

\*\*\*

When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring,  
We come back in the snow,

\*\*\*

You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,  
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.

\*\*\*

Blue, blue is the grass about the river  
And the willows have overfilled the close garden.

\*\*\*

The canopy embroidered with dragons  
drinks in and cast back the sun.

\*\*\*

And I, wrapped in brocade, went to sleep with my head on his lap,  
And my spirit so high it was all over the heavens, (12)

\*\*\*

Line after line of such elegant and simple writing, although taken for granted ninety-one years later, would have seemed a bit out of place in English poetry of its time. And hence, a more subtle element is added to Pound's bridge helping West understand the East. Barry Ahearn summarized this sensation superbly when he wrote, "The effects of such verbal perplexities in *Cathay* is to produce a strange impression, the impression that this translation has been produced not by Ezra Pound, but by a native speaker of Chinese whose command of English is less than fluent." (13)

Reading *Cathay*, I was struck at how relevant the themes were in the new millenia and so, in 2000, I was granted rights by New Directions to use the poems of *Cathay* within a short film. The film depicted twenty four hours in the life of a western couple. The poems were heard as voice-overs and there was no on-screen dialogue. The couple are distant. She wonders what has gone wrong in their marriage. He goes to work and flirts with another woman in his office and is discovered by his wife. In the end they reconcile settling into an uneasy peace. The relationship between the two and their subsequent day are direct visualizations of the poems, serving to illustrate that the themes of *Cathay* are relevant to the twenty-first century. The human condition changes little.

The actors reading the poems were auditioned and rehearsed for weeks prior to the recording of the poems in a professional studio in downtown Toronto. The poems were roughly sound-edited on a computer, allowing minute changes in the pitch of the actor's voice and the stretching out of certain syllables if needed in order to perfect the rhythm of the reading. Filming then commenced with a CD of the poems playing in the background, allowing the actors to mate their actions to the rhythm of the poetry. Shooting lasted twelve days. Finally, with all the raw materials in place, the poems were further sound edited into a final version after which the editing of the visual footage took place. The marriage between sound

and sight occupied another year. *Cathay: Poems by Ezra Pound*, debuted at the 2002 Venice Film Festival, I representing my own effort to bridge East and West.

Pound's *Cathay* uses many techniques, such as the use of recognizably Asian proper nouns and phrases, the depiction of accepted Asian gestures, the use of *faux* Chinese poetic syntax when it suited him, allowing for the illusion that *Cathay* might have been written by one whom English was their second language. A masterful feat of editing twists, turns and, frankly, damn good writing. (14)

Pound had finished a marvelous span allowing West to meet East across cultures and millennia. But what do we find after crossing this bridge that Pound built? What are these themes? What do these old poets tell us?

As I pointed out when describing my film, what remains striking in *Cathay* aside from Pound's startling musical technique, is precisely that the themes are so universal. Witness the following untitled excerpts:

\*\*\*

At fourteen I married My Lord you.  
I never laughed, being bashful.  
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.  
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,  
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours  
Forever and forever and forever.//

At sixteen you departed,  
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,  
And you have been gone five months.  
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.



\*\*\*

Who has brought the flaming imperial tiger?  
Who has brought the army with drums and  
with kettle-drums?

...

A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle kingdom,  
Three hundred and sixty thousand,  
And sorrow, sorrow like rain.

...

Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate  
With Roboku's name forgotten,  
And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

\*\*\*

When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring,  
We come back in the snow,  
We go slowly, we are hungry and thirsty,  
Our mind is full of sorrow, who will know of our grief?

\*\*\*

Her overskirt is the same silk dyed in purple,  
And when men going by look on Rafu  
They set down their burdens,  
They stand and twirl their mustaches.

\*\*\*

And the wide, flat road stretches out.  
I stop in my room toward the East, quiet, quiet,  
I pat my new cask of wine.  
My friends are estranged, or far distant,  
I bow my head and stand still.

\*\*\*

And she was a courtesan in the old days  
And she has married a sot,  
Who now goes drunkenly out  
And leaves her too much alone.

\*\*\*

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,  
White river winding about them;  
Here we must take separation  
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.

\*\*\*

And if you ask how I regret that parting:  
It is like the flowers falling at spring's end.  
    Confused, whirled in a tangle.  
What is the use of talking, and there is no end to talking,  
There is no end to things in the heart. (15)

\*\*\*

Unhappy marriages, broken love, the pain of departing friends or, to paraphrase the opening line of Pound's *Canto 74* in a modern relevance, "the enormous tragedy of the dream in the soldier's bent shoulders," it would be difficult to deny the similarities between East and West, then and now, as presented in *Cathay*. We have, in fact, traveled in nothing but a large circle. Ironically one of Pound's greater achievements in translation was, in the end, exactly what he complained of in his opening letter; a confirmation that at the core of *Cathay* and, by inference, a great many works, *the poem remains the same*. Pound climbs Everest against wicked odds. Exhausted, he reaches the summit and discovers a table, a chair and a hot meal. A mother figure appears with a withering stare, "You're late! The others have already eaten. . . ."

## NOTES

1. Letter EP to William Carlos Williams. London, October 21, 1908. The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941. Ed. D.D. Paige. Harcourt Brace and Company: New York. 1950. p. 4-5.
2. Takata Tomiichi, E. Pound's *Cathay* and E. Fenollosa's MSS. on Chinese Poetry—The Collation of Fenollosa's MSS. and Pound's *Cathay*—(Ezra Pound's *Cathay* IV), Bulletin of Atomigakuen Women's University No. 14. March 1981. p. 109-163.

The above was loosely verified when compared to similar excerpts from:

- a. Zhaoming Qian: "Translation or Invention: Three *Cathay* Poems Reconsidered," appendix 1. *Paideuma* v. 19, 182. Spring and Fall 1990. p70.
- b. Sanehide Kodoma, *Cathay* and Fenollosa's Notebooks. *Paideuma* vii.2. Fall 1982. p. 207-240.
- c. Anne S. Chapple, *Ezra Pound's Cathay: Compilation from the Fenollosa Notebooks*. *Paideuma* vi7. 2/3. Fall/Winter 1988. p. 9-46.
- d. Scans of the Fenollosa notebooks on the Beinecke Digital Images website. Only the Tomiichi article reproduces Fenollosa's translations for *all* of *Cathay*.
3. Taking Leave of a Friend, *Cathay*. Elkin Mathews 1915. p.28. Reprinted in *Personae*. New Directions. 1990. p. 141.

4. Kenner, Yip, Kodoma, Qian, Chapple, Ahearn, Jiang Lu, Jang
5. Tokata, Tomiichi. Ezra Pound's Cathay and E. Fenollosa's MS. and Pound's Cathay—(Ezra Pound's Cathay IV). Bulletin of Atomigakuen Women's University, No. 14 March 1981. p. 109–163. This article is a line by line reformatted reproduction, (i.e., not facsimile reproductions) including all the Chinese characters, of all of Fenollosa's notes to all eighteen poems of Cathay. This article is an essential reference for any scholar interest in *Cathay*. Pound's versions are reprinted at following each of the Fenollosa translations.
6. "North" of "North Gate," line 22, Lament of the Frontier Guard and "Layu," line 66, Exile's letter. Although the second syllable "yu" is in the relevant Fenollosa line, the first syllable, "La" is not. It is clear that, when one compares Pound's *Cathay* line by line to Fenollosa's translations, Pound has composed *Cathay* by not only rewriting Fenollosa's English syntactical translations (i.e., rewriting line 4 in the examples above) but also, when technically suitable, Pound would take individual words from the Japanese phonetic translations (line 2 in the examples given in the main essay body) as well as, on occasion, chose a word from line 3. *Cathay*, in essence, is a skillful weaving of all components of the corresponding Fenollosa notes using a great deal of similar word phrases.
7. Barry Ahearn. Cathay: What Sort of Translation? Ezra Pound and China. Zhaoming Qian, ed. University of Michigan Press. 2003. p. 31.
8. Takata. p. 147
9. Yip, Wai-Lim. Ezra Pound's Cathay. Princeton University Press. 1969. p. 126.
10. *ibid.* p.125–128.
11. Ezra Pound. South Folk in Cold Country, Cathay. Elkin Mathews. 1915. Reprinted in *Personae. New Directions.* 1990. p.143.
12. Ezra Pound. Four Poems of Departure, epilogue, Taking Leave Of a Friend, Song of The Bowmen of Shu, The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter, The Beautiful Toilet, Old Idea of Choan By Rosorio. Cathay. reprinted in *Personae. New Directions.* 1990.
13. Barry Ahearn. Cathay: What Sort of Translation? Ezra Pound and China. Zhaoming Qian, ed. University of Michigan. 2003. p.31–48.
14. It must be stated that although *Cathay* is definitely Pound's, many of the word orders and occasional phrases were already in the Fenollosa notes. Fenollosa must be given credit for his initial poetic translations for which, upon my comparison with all of *Cathay*, Pound followed closely. Take this representative example from Fenollosa's Poem by the Bridge and Ten-Shin. I give Pound's line following:

ten	shin	san	getsu	ji
(name of bridge in		3d	month	time
Rakuyo "Heaven's Ferry")				

At Tenshin bridge in March time

(P) March has come to the bridge head,

sen	mon	to	yo	ri
1000	gates	peaches	with	apricots

The 1000 gates have peaches & apricots (gates of morning)

(P) Peaches boughs and apricot boughs hang over a thousand gates,

cho	i	dan	cho	ka
morning	becoming	cut, rend	intestine	flowers
(intestine emotion)				

In the morning they are unbearable beautiful flowers

(P) At morning there are flowers to cut the heart.

bo	chikut	to	riu	sui
evening	pursue, drive on	east	going	water

By the evening they decay and follow the eastern flowing water.

(P) And evening drives them on the eastward-flowing waters.

From Lament of the Frontier Guard

Haku	kotsu	o	sen	so
White	bones	lie	thousand	frost, years

The white bones lie there through a thousand frosts

(P) Bones white with a thousand frosts,

sa	ga	hei	shin	bo
steep	steep	cover	trees	grass

(bones) making steep heaps, covered by thorning trees and grass

(P) High heaps covered with trees and grass;

15. Ezra Pound. The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter, Lament of the Frontier Guard, Song of the Bowmen of Shu, A Ballad Of The Mulberry Road, To-Em-Mei's "The Unmoving Cloud," The Beautiful Toilet, Taking Leave Of A Friend, Exile's Letter.

*Bernard Dew*

## ☛ Hunting Shypoke

I don't remember falling. I had dreams about it, plunging through darkness, thorny limbs scrabbling for me, but they weren't memories. Walter said I bounced when I landed. Twice. I don't think he remembered either, even if he did see it, but he could always tell a story better than I could. I do remember the broken arm and cracked ribs. You get what you pay for, Walter always said. I can still feel the arm when it's cold out. I can always feel the place.

Sixty years and pitch black and I can still feel it. This was my lookout, our lookout. It's a miracle I made it up here at all at my age; even with the ladder bolted right to the tree, I didn't think I'd make it this time. The ladder looks new; he must have put it up pretty recently. The old one was wooden rungs nailed right to the tree, but this one is aluminum, like for painting. When we were kids, Walter and I use to climb up using nothing but our hands and feet, and then pull our rifles up on baling twine. There's still some of it here tied to the rail. The stand itself looks the same, though. It's rotten, I can tell, so I trust my back only against the trunk of the tree. The weight of the gun in my pocket pulls me to the left; it lays against my thigh, pressing its cold through my wool long underwear and into my flesh. Tucked under my T-shirt against my chest, a chrome whistle echoes its chill.

Still dark. I could do it now, but I want to save the pistol for the sun. Walter always liked the first minutes of the day best, especially in the late fall when he could sit out in the tree stand and watch the first rays break the night sky free from the horizon. Then the sun would peek over the edge and light up the hoar frost on the trees like frozen candle flames. He'd say the same thing every time he wrote me, "I'll bet they don't have a sunrise like this in your Chicago, professor." I never noticed till I retired, but cities don't really have a dawn. That's worth coming home for.

I don't need the sun to know what's out there, though. I was proud of myself this morning, finding my way out here in the dark. Walter could have done it

backwards with his eyes closed, of course. I've forgotten some things. At first I felt lost, but then it all came back to me, and by the time my flashlight found the tree, I was home. I know the ridge we nicknamed the Continental Divide, after learning about the real one in geography class, is straight out in front of me to the east about a half-mile. Beyond the ridge is the bare bulb of rock called the Knob. I can almost make them out now, the Knob poking its head up just over the shoulders of the ridge. When the sun finally comes up, it will crown the Knob like a halo. Behind me, downhill and to the west a mile or so, is Little Turtle Lake. Our house is right on the lake, and we grew up as much in the water as on land. There is no Big Turtle Lake, but that never seemed odd to me then. To the north and south is nothing but forest and hills and lakes as far as the eye can see. A great green carpet crawling over some lumpy mystery. A boring view in those directions for kids used to seeing woods stretch for miles, but it never mattered to us; we were always looking east. Funny, from my place in Chicago, I can only see the sunset. Maybe I shouldn't have gone away; it's so far to come back. Walt went so sudden; I guess I just wasn't prepared to travel. He was born second and I never thought he could go first.

There's a creek running between here and the ridge, Clacker's Creek, though I never knew who Clacker was. Just on the other side of the creek, in a clearing, is the little clubhouse that Walt and I built ourselves. We wouldn't let Catherine or Laura in, no matter how hard they beat on the crooked plywood door, until Mother made us because she said she was sick to death of hearing them whine about it. Spanning the creek is an enormous hollow log; when we were very young, we could crawl right through it to the other side, and when we were too big for that we just walked across the top. We'd run back and forth all day long between the little house and this stand, keeping watch and preparing for the Germans to attack—funny thing for German-American kids to play, I suppose, but that was the only enemy we could think of. I doubt this was ever much good as a deer stand with kids running through here all year long, but my father never said anything. He just put up another stand for himself as far away from us as he



could get and told us not to mess with it. We looked for that stand for years and never found it, and maybe it never was.

Before we were old enough to hunt deer or anything else on our own, Walt and I hunted Shypoke. We never did get one, but we knew they were out there; we just weren't clever enough to see one. Each of us said we had, but I never asked him what it looked like, and he never asked me. Everyone around here knows what Shypoke look like, even those who haven't seen one, and since everyone knows already, nobody needs to ask. No, we both knew what we were after. The only question was how to go about hunting one. Shypoke live for a good long time, and they learn everything about these woods and lakes, so catching one is no easy job. My father used to say that the Shypoke were made up of the land come to life, and if they went away then everything else would go too. The old boys at the Sportsman's Café said that when they were kids they used to dig a deep pit and make a little teepee over it with straight bare branches. All over the outside, they'd hang vines and leaves and stuff until it looked like a pile of brush. It's a well-known fact, they said, that Shypoke love to go crashing through anything less solid than a tree, and, when one would try to crash through the vine teepee, it would fall in the pit and there you'd have it. Well of course we knew about the crashing business, but we also knew that Shypoke dig like badgers, so we didn't see how that plan was going to work. What we finally came up with was a big net made out of fifty-pound test fishing line. We figured we'd stretch that between two trees and camouflage it, and when the Shypoke tried to crash through, it would get all tangled up. After it was in the net, we knew we'd have to dispatch it with our broom handle spears, or, if things got really dangerous, our Daisy BB guns. We thought that sounded pretty cruel, but you can't take chances where Shypoke are concerned.

Our father even came out to see the trap. He sized it up for almost ten minutes, looking at it from every angle, testing the strength of the line, asking us questions. In the end, he said it was the finest Shypoke trap he'd ever seen, and if we didn't catch one they were just too smart to be caught at all. We spent two weeks

working weekends and after school to make that net, and we almost missed the season, but it was worth it. He was proud of us that day, his boys.

My father was immortal, and because we believed it, it was true. He lived it—hunting, fishing, trapping, drinking, laughing. The man could swim across Little Turtle without resting, and once he ran all the way home from the Knob in his cloddy field boots, all four miles, because he said the tractor was too slow. I drove full out on the cantankerous thing, just to prove him wrong, but he was there before I could catch him.

None of us ever saw him die; he left us before we got the chance. I think he always wanted to be something else, somewhere else. He was smart, got most of the way through college before his father died and he had to come back home to run the farm. He brought Mother back with him. I think for a while he was a decent farmer, even on this terrible, rocky soil. We had livestock, a small dairy herd, some pigs and chickens, and there always seemed to be enough. We fished and wild riced and hunted, too. And there were good people here, and other kids. We'd all get together for a big picnic over at the Lutheran church for the Fourth. And usually a supper around the holidays. I miss that now. We were all happy then—except for my father. He tried. He really did try. His body was always here, but he was somewhere else. On the clouds, at the bottom of the sea, in one of those faraway places he dreamed about in college, I never knew for sure, but you could sort of see it in his eyes. Then one day, when we all got too human for him, he was gone.

In school we read all about the gods of mythology. Some of them loved the human spirit so much that they fell in love with mortals, had children, and spent their time on earth. Mother was the human girl that my father fell in love with. Our earth. She gave us life, in the beginning and every day after that. She was a plain, soft-spoken, practical woman with none of my father's daydreams or nightmares, and that was the source of her power. My father was always on the wind and flying away from us. Mother was rooted, deep and solid in the ground. She could be shaken, as she was when my father finally blew away, but she was far

too stable to be moved. We built our lives on her safe soil. I once asked her, at a time when Walt and I were causing a particular amount of trouble, if she was sorry she'd had boys. She pulled my face so close to hers that all I could see was eyeball. "The reason I had twin boys, and don't think for a minute that I didn't do it on purpose, was so I could love you twice as much. Besides, I could tell, even then, that your sister was going to be so much work that she'd need two big brothers to look out for her. Mothers know their kids, Will, even before they have them. We even know they're going to be bad sometimes, so don't think you're anything but exactly what I always wanted." I never heard my mother say a harsh word about anyone in her whole life, even when she had good reason, and I never knew how she felt about my father after he left, but she never spoke ill of him, or allowed anyone else to. On her last day, as I sat on her bed like a child, she grabbed my hand with strength and told me to stop feeling sorry for myself. "Everything's like it's supposed to be, dear," she said in a sweet hum, "just like it's always been with us." The thought of her warms me.

Light. Almost sunrise. Damn, I didn't mean to fall asleep. Everyone back at the house will be getting up. Family, friends, neighbors. I hardly know anyone anymore, but I want to know them. Ceremony's at eleven. Too bad you've got to be there; you never did like funerals, even less than me I guess. We couldn't drag you to Mother's. If we could switch places, play the twin game one more time, you could be here for your sun and I could be there instead of you—just for a minute, to see if where you are is OK. When you got sick, I promised I'd do the sunrise for you, just like we always planned. The pistol and the whistle were my idea.

The pale light brings it back. I can see with my eyes now—this wonderful land. And our little clubhouse, it's still there, like we'd built it yesterday. Even from here I can see how crooked the door is. It's beautiful, but how can that be? It should be wormwood. Walter. It must have been. He always took care of everything.

I can see him now, standing on the log, keeping watch for the evil Germans, Catherine and Laura. He was always the forward lookout, on that hollow bridge where they couldn't sneak past him to the clubhouse. I always stayed here closer to

safety, waiting for his air-raid siren. He's there, watching, but something's moving up by our clearing. Well, I'll be damned. It's the girls. Somehow they got past the creek without using the log. Walt's still looking downhill towards the lake. He'll never see them. If there's one thing I can say for certain about my sister Catherine, it's that she's sneaky. And our neighbor Laura is almost as bad. They hate going in that creek. The rocks are so sharp you have to wear shoes, and, coming from springs and snowmelt the way it does, it's so cold your bones ache. Walt watches from the log because he thinks that's the only way they'll dare come. They're crawling on their bellies now, almost there, slithering through the leaves. Why can't he hear them? They must be making a lot of noise. But I can't hear them either, or anything else. Not even the invisible buzz of normal silence. "Walter you dummy, they're right behind you!" I shout, trying to pierce the air, but my words stall and float back past me like goose down. They have him now, Cath on one leg and Laura on the other, but he doesn't go down without a fight. Once they get him up the slope away from the creek, they drag him into a pile of leaves, collected for just such occasions, and dive on him again. A big beach ball of wool sweaters and jeans explodes from the pile and goes rolling downhill. It bursts apart before it reaches the creek bank, and all three pieces flop on their backs, boiling over with mute laughter. The girls tackle Walt once more and then sprint away from him towards the clubhouse. He looks up at me as they slam my crooked door behind them. Sorry Walt, I can't help you now; I'm waiting on the sun.

It's time. The first rays are bending over the Divide and I've waited long enough. Walter needs me to do this. But weren't the girls beautiful? I loved them both as sisters, until I was old enough to see Laura as something else. They stayed friends all those years. Little girls, high school, college, they were inseparable just like Walt and me. Maybe it's a good thing that they went together. I never would have said that to the boys driving the car, though. They got what they paid for, but not before they took my girls.

The pistol in my pocket is still cold. I guess this old body couldn't lend it any heat. 1911 Colt. 45. Our father left it behind, but I've never seen it fired. Walter and I

admired it as kids, always said we'd fire it someday, but we preferred our rifles and shotguns. We never had any use for a thing like this. The whistle was Mother's—her voice was so soft we couldn't hear her when she'd try to yell for supper, so she started blowing the whistle to call us home.

"William." The name comes from below, flushed from brush and flying. He only calls me by my full name when he's truly serious. He's on the log again, almost under the stand. I can hear him now. He's not talking, but I can always hear him.

"Stay."

I don't want to hear anymore and try to plug my ears. I can't stay. I don't know how and everything goes away.

"Stay. You can stay here."

I uncover my ears because everything is inside. Tugging the whistle out from under my shirt, I give three short, hard blasts just like Mother used to do. Walt smiles up at me and disappears off into the woods towards the lake. "Time to go, Will. I'll race you home."

Almost ready, Walt. I pull Father's pistol out of my pocket and point it into the air. Stop breathing and let the trigger take you by surprise. Seven shots. No real salute, but the best I can do with only one clip. It would give me a heart attack firing this damn thing more than that anyway. We finally got to fire the gun.

Someone down below me again now, someone else, people shouting to each other, too loud for this place, though, not the way Walter and I talk at all.

"He's over here in the stand, Ron, just like last year!"

Catherine. That's got to be her down there. She needs to get home with Walt. "Cath, we're not playing anymore; Walt's gone in already."

"Dad, it's Abby!"

"Abby . . . My Abby?"

"Yeah, Dad, your Abby. God, Dad, you just scared the shit out of me with that damn gun! What are you out here shooting at? We thought you were still sleeping."

"I'm just saying goodbye to your Uncle Will before the funeral. I'll be down in a minute."

"You're Will, Dad, you're William. You mean Uncle Walt, your brother Walter."

"Of course, I mean Walter." I can see her now through the hole in the floor. A beautiful girl, Cath. Walter would be so proud. Beautiful like everything out here on our land.

"Dad, come down now. Uncle Walt has been gone for years, since I was a kid. You remember."

Perfect. There it is. The sun is over the top and everything is on fire. Lit-up just like it used to be. Beautiful. Why would anyone want to live anywhere else.

"I remember. I remember everything."

*Pete Duglar*

## ☼ The Picture

The wind sweeps into the picture,  
like some shy child  
hiding in the housedresses.  
The women, the girls stand together  
as a wall against the ever-present wind  
a form in the prairie emptiness  
shoulder to shoulder  
curls tangling curls  
distance vanishing to oil fields.

This is the day that God has given  
among years of crop rows  
drawing the harrow, plowing  
working the kitchen gardens, canning,  
their hands fussed with the dresses, the curtains  
and always they were cleaning—  
they knew the dirt, the dugout dwellings  
the drafty oil lease houses.  
Were they coming together or moving,  
ready to move on, away  
away from the grit against the teeth?

I have come from these women  
strong brow  
affable smile, nurturing breasts.  
We have worked cloth  
pushed thin needles through layers  
of cotton, old dresses  
turned into flower garden quilts  
in the dust-covered wasteland

scraps of what there is  
what remains  
pieced into order and comfort.

And, together we have carried the sons,  
skinny and tall  
into a world that  
rockets them on storms  
into their time.

*M. Camille Eaton*



## ☪ To Talk of Remembrance

To talk of remembrance is not to talk.  
Remembering is other. It remains in the blood.  
What one says is less. The blood remains.  
As of an afternoon in early summer  
warm but not of later heat.  
I sat with him my father on a seat  
he had built for me a swing  
in an old apple tree I do remember  
exhilaration when I used it my feet  
swung out above the ground waiting  
not knowing how I might come down.

He was leaving us for a year and thought  
to have a talk. I was young. Neither of us  
knew what to say. It was not easy  
yet not hard to go through motions sitting there.  
Suddenly

    he hit his hand against the tree.  
One tiny drop of blood. I do not remember  
what he said. The color of the blood  
stays with me.

    He left and so did I.

*Theodore Enslin*

☿ A Song for Bright Days

What has come over them?  
those who are bemused  
but see only by the half light  
of where they are bemused?  
Fuddled a common word for it  
exact the time of year  
when many can think or say  
in love and others  
pretend they're not.

How can we avoid it?  
the earth is opening  
light descends into it.

*Theodore Enslin*

## ❧ NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND—ONLY QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS

There are two subjects that I would do just about anything to avoid having to talk about: sports and politics. Over the years, I have become fairly skilled at making sure that I'm never around when the conversation starts heading in either of those directions. At parties, for instance, I always have a half-empty drink so that the very moment that I hear the words "all-time best point guard" or "right-wing agenda," I'm armed with a ready-made excuse for bee-lining it to the bar. Besides, sports and politics have never really had an effect on my life in any major way. I'm just a little ol' reading teacher, after all.

Of course, all that started to change very recently.

As a reading specialist by day and a budding reading researcher by night, I never thought that I would also be spending a considerable amount of time wondering about the fate of reading instruction on a national level. For the most part, I've been able to close the door to a classroom and use my collective years of teaching experience to instruct my students. Once I even asked myself a very naïve question: How political could reading instruction be? My eyes have certainly been opened since then.

Reid Lyon, one of the chief jackasses with the NIH, has helped the most in peeling back my eyelids.

Reid Lyon has also left me slack jawed on a number of occasions. Here are two of my "favorite" things he has said: "If I had my way, I would blow up all the colleges of education," and "Those professors [in colleges of ed] are some of the most resistant, recalcitrant people you'll find." (There are others. Perhaps the most unbelievable thing Reid Lyon has said is that George W. Bush is the first president that he has ever seen who knows the education issue backwards and forwards "even though he has certain speech characteristics that might not make you think so.")

I think it's absolutely outrageous that someone can say that the research that has been done in colleges of education over the past 30 years is "not worth reviewing." Roughly translated, Lyon is saying this: Qualitative research is the

research the colleges of education have been doing over the past 30 years, and since we don't have a cure for reading problems, then qualitative research must not be worth doing. To be fair, Lyon isn't the only one saying it.

Lyon and others enjoy sitting in cushioned chairs, spouting impressive-sounding crap like "in a ten-year randomized trial" and "12 sites had 40-50% improvement" and various other quantitative-laden drivel. They like to fold this language in with countless other meaningless phrases like "making tough decisions helps us go forward" and "the compelling questions are the ones that need answering" and "we must know first what we do not know."

So here I am smack-dab in the middle of a political whirlwind. A student of the college that Lyon would like to blow up. A student learning about and practicing how to conduct (mostly) qualitative research. Lyons would say that this university is simply preparing me to repeat the sins that have been made in colleges of education over the past 30 years. I'm destined to wear a scarlet letter "Q," I suppose.

All of this political stuff that's going on comes at an interesting point in my education, actually. I've just begun my studies in the Curriculum and Instruction program. I haven't been too brainwashed by those "resistant, recalcitrant" education professors that I couldn't change paths and head over to the science department or quantitative department (wherever those are located?!). Because of these classes, I've read about science and I've read about quantitative methodology, and as of this moment, I'm still pro-qualitative research. And while I say that I'm pro-qualitative, it doesn't mean that I'm con anything in particular. It's not like I'm going to go to campus next week wearing a "Science Sux" sweatshirt or a "Quantitative Don't Count for Squat" T-shirt.

My readings so far this semester have helped me to understand more clearly *why* I'm a qualitative researcher. I'm not a qualitative researcher because that is the methodology that I have been (mostly) taught and I will blindly be loyal to it. I'm a qualitative researcher because I believe that this methodology yields the results that it aims to; unfortunately critics want true-for-all-cases kinds of results, but that is not what qualitative studies seek. I believe that the only way

to really know what is going on in a classroom is to be there, because context is everything. I believe that classroom learning is about language exchange that can be powerful, and that it takes words on a page to adequately report out those results, not numbers on a chart. I believe that qualitative researchers are like mystery detectives; they look for clues to unlock things that haven't been seen before or that have been seen before but look different now. I believe that qualitative researchers are just as rigorous with their methods (data collection/analysis) as other scientists, even though their forms of data look different. I believe that qualitative researchers care a great deal for their subjects and that classrooms are value-laden environments and should be. And while I believe that quantitative research methods can have a place in studies of classrooms, they should be used in conjunction with qualitative methods, not in the absence of.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 speaks of scientific research; there are 111 references to it.<sup>2</sup> The federal government is clearly seeking scientific research for policy and practice decisions. It wants a cure-all, some kind of prescriptive instrument that is one-size-fits-all, complete with the numbers to back it up. It wants to make a science out of the art of teaching. It wants to ignore individual funds of knowledge that are present in classrooms. It leaves little space in classrooms for creating anything more than widget minds. The former Deputy Secretary of Education for Instruction said that there will be "no more creative and innovative teaching." (She was asked to resign.) But she's right: The political engine is looking for something that can be dumped into students' heads with a high rate of success (100%, no doubt) and is replicable and generalizable and everything else that goes along with "scientifically based research." It sounds like we're making robots, not working with children.

I think politics is about scapegoating. I think qualitative research is the scapegoat this time around. Someone told me just to stay low under the radar and hope that this is a fad that passes. I'm not sure that once something goes political that it can be deemed a fad. But I am sure about a few things: (1) At some point I

may not be able to close my classroom's door and do as I please. (2) As a result of choosing to continue to do qualitative research, I had better know why it is I am doing it and be able to show that those methods are the best ones available for what I am seeking. (3) Federal funding won't be available for my qualitative researcher community.

So now when I go to parties, I drink less and rant about politics more. Who would have thought that a little ol' reading teacher like me would become so gripped by politics? Sports is still another story altogether.

*Charles Fuhrken*

#### NOTES

1. Reid Lyon, Chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, was a featured speaker at a conference about science and education called "Rigorous Evidence—The Key to Progress in Education?" That talk is available at [excelgov.org/displayContent.asp?Keyword=prppcEvidence](http://excelgov.org/displayContent.asp?Keyword=prppcEvidence) by webcast. Look for Panel 2: Reid Lyon. All quotations were from that speech.

2. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is available in full-text form at [ed.gov/legislation/EdScienceRef/](http://ed.gov/legislation/EdScienceRef/).

☪ Misao

out of the blue  
she said  
"I too once wanted to be a bassist"  
I mumbled  
you kiddin'! Misao the bassist? . . . . .  
this quiet shy wife of mine  
I'll be darned

married 39 years  
never knew her secret desire . . . . .  
come to think of it  
it reveals something universal

N.M.  
our respectable friend  
one of the most self-effacing shy ones  
is a bassist alright  
so with E.M.  
that humongous bear of a man  
from Blue Grass of Kentucky  
one of the best in his trade  
is a bassist

now Misao  
this tiny good wife of mine  
had a secret desire  
to be a bassist?  
I'll be darned . . . . .

who said  
"Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . . ."?

*Sotcha Furuta*

☼ Words for a Friend's Old Cat

Over the phone I hear I hear  
you telling the general world.  
Loudmouth. Don't you care  
that in this day it's *de rigueur*  
even for cats to keep shut?  
Or are you saying, at eighty-four,  
clipped where eczema devils your pelt,  
that it's too late for shenanigans,  
that conformity can go to the kittens?

Next I know you've taken a powder—  
french-leave without so much  
as by-your over the hill.  
Ads in the papers, three hundred  
handbills, searching patrols:  
"Wilfred, Wilfred," snapping of fingers,  
calling, cajoling, beating the bush . . . .  
They'd casually changed your address  
so you up . . . . and you haven't come home.

That you are making out superbly  
I choose to believe. Somewhere you're strutting  
your stuff, propounding your views.  
I see you rid of civilized itch,  
decent in fur, resourcefully  
lucky at stalking a new diet  
of succulent mice and porky wild rats  
the rest of your clamorous days.  
*Salut.* Sleep warm.

Vi Gale



## ☯ A Wildness

A wildness of questions  
occupies my life  
unaccountable  
inconstant  
like another being  
from another planet  
the thoughts flit  
swift  
and changing  
from despair  
and aging  
to something  
I cannot define  
    like  
    you.

*A.B. Gibson*

☞ #1 North Lamar / #13 South Congress

I fill a time slot  
on the work schedule  
it tears me away

I shave my face  
& hold back another  
eruption for as long  
as I can

5 mornings  
out of 7  
up earlier than I want to be  
—it's unnatural

a quick smoke  
& bus ride  
following the route  
everyday

10:15, the same faces  
make our way up Guadalupe street  
until the 5:15 takes us home  
same ugly faces, tired, impatient  
nursing wounds

some of us w/plans  
to escape & forget  
the whole shitty work day

*Abraham Gibson*

⌘ blackout

the lights went out  
in the middle of the day  
a rare cold day in Austin

the grinding machines  
of commerce—silent  
for a few minutes  
then everything lurches  
back in an electrical surge

my hopes for a day off—  
the slim chance of escape—  
that the power won't come back on  
that the city is slightly fucked  
are gone w/a blast of thinking  
fluorescent light

but the city is still slightly fucked  
even w/the lights on

*Abraham Gibson*

☯ hurting to take her hurt away

she's next to me  
in bed  
crying softly  
w/ intensity building

tears in my eyes too  
(it's contagious)

I tell her:  
stop it  
come on,  
stop it

moonlight  
slicing  
through  
the curtains  
in south Austin

in love  
w/ her  
hurting to  
take her hurt away  
sleeping closer  
in salty tears

*Abraham Gibson*

☯ untitled

trying  
to  
discern  
a  
pattern  
in  
all  
this  
chaos

*Abraham Gibson*

## ☯ Nothing Lasts Forever

*"Languages, arts and religions disintegrate with time. Yet the perfecting of such forms is the only criterion of progress; the destruction of them the chief evidence of decay."*

—George Santayana

Even lichen'd sandhill rocks of the garden  
Wall, oxidized in ancient shallow  
Seas served their purposes: paint rocks nomad  
Tribesmen crumbled for dye, for war,  
Stained their bodies purple, orange, ochre,  
Red.

On the gaudy screen embedded  
Reporters of sandstorms, maimed children,  
Lethal bombardments, shock and awe, tell  
Of looting and destruction, power  
Enacted, old chaos comes again,  
barbarism wins.

Words, beliefs, art, peace  
Disintegrate in the land between  
Two rivers, where the story began.

*Grace Gibson*

## ☿ Tilda and the Dead Squirrel

*"If you eat your totem animal you lose your power."*

—High Priestess of Lizardia

Huntress of the backyard  
Fleet of foot and swift of attack  
With pride you bring home the bacon  
Twice your size  
Flopping it onto the platter  
No fear of losing your power you feast  
With full knowledge that your totem animal  
Is a man.

*Martha D. Gibson*

✿ Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother  
*for Susana Sirhan*

Guideline to live by,  
Lifeline to die by.  
Your sin is being raped at 16;  
Or is it having a proud and beaming brother  
Firing once a gun to your head?  
Custom born of culture and not religion:  
"A man's honor lies between the legs of a woman."  
Even a dead woman.

*Martha D. Gibson*



## ☼ Ordinary Things

Power come to us  
in the light of morning  
in the light of night.  
Disseminate freely  
where need is dark  
and open up connections  
that we may sail freely  
into strength  
bouncing back from weakness  
into the sunlight of things  
body building  
mind absorbing  
regenerating  
coming to discover  
the power of ordinary things.

*Larry Goodell*

## ❁ A Visit

The dog, Stanley, was half-Dalmatian and half-Blue Heeler, mostly white with irregular black spots. She had a huge one covering her right eye, like an eye patch. Elizabeth lay on the couch, a big tan thing with soft cushions and black ink stains on the middle cushion. Stanley's head rested neatly on Elizabeth's lap as she lay there, curled up like a shrimp. Every once in a while, Stanley's dainty feet would spasm, and a little whimper would escape from her half-open mouth. When they'd picked her up at the animal shelter, Dr. Kinski told them to be careful with Stanley, that she'd been abused and often had bad dreams. They were supposed to pet her until she calmed down. She did this, now. Elizabeth's boyfriend, Shaun, leaned over from his position on the couch and, with a gentle motion, stroked Stanley's quivering ear.

"All right, mama, it's okay." Her boyfriend looked over at her, and Elizabeth noticed his beautiful, wide eyes. Big and brown. Like almonds. Or peanut M&Ms. His skin was brown too—he was Hispanic, and proud of it. She caressed his cheek with her palm and it was soft, perfect, inviting. He wore wire-rimmed glasses that made him look distinguished, she thought. And sexy. And she hoped—at least he'd told her before—that he was thinking how beautiful she was, pale skin and all. He'd said her eyes were such a dark brown that they sometimes seemed not to have any pupils, just like the characters in old black-and-white cartoons. Those characters had big black eyes without pupils, too. He smiled at her, an imperfect smile, of course, but still mesmerizing. "God, I love you." She felt her insides turn over once or twice. She got a pleasurable hollow feeling, deep in her abdomen. She leaned over and cupped his face in her hand, and kissed him, and his lips were perfect, beautiful, experienced lips.

It was Superbowl Sunday, and they'd ordered pizza from their favorite delivery place. She was glad that things were resolved now. Hearing his voice on the phone earlier had dissolved all their fights like a powerful antibiotic—made them seem insignificant and petty, and he seemed available and worth having again.

Still, a feeling of uneasiness gripped her, and held on, even now. The Superbowl announcers were busy laughing at each other's cheesy one-liners and slapping one another on the back for their clever analyses. One of them had a yellow and pink checked suit on, which made him look really sleazy, she thought. When the commercial for "rich, chocolate Ovaltine" aired, Elizabeth placed her hands next to her on the couch, pushed off of the cushions, and stepped over Shaun's legs, which were stretched out on the coffee table.

"Do you want anything, babe?" she asked as she headed towards the kitchen.

"Nope, thanks baby." The countertop, made out of cheap formica, was littered with turned-over cups and wadded-up napkins. Stanley's dog treats were neatly stacked in one corner, but that was it; everything else was all over the damn place. As she opened the refrigerator, she glanced at the picture, taken of the two of them, when they'd first started dating. Her pink shirt and his red shirt seemed to make one large rectangular shirt. They sat on the very same couch in each other's arms. He was holding a Shiner Bock and his mouth was wide open, and he didn't look particularly handsome in the picture; it was one of those unflattering candid shots. As she looked at it, though, she felt happy. Very happy. She leaned on him in the picture, with one arm perched lovingly across his knee and the other almost defensively draped across her chest. Her mouth was open, too, in a glimmering smile that showed all her teeth.

She heard him changing channels in the other room. Cartoon Network came on, and ads for *Sponge Bob* and *Bobby's World* traveled through the living room and into the kitchen. A girl with a nasal, high-pitched voice began to advertise: "Remember, *Bobby's World* is moving to Mondays! Right here on Cartoon Network!" She poured herself a glass of pulpy orange juice—the way she liked it, he'd remembered—and as she leaned back to drink it, she stepped into a puddle of water in the middle of the floor.

"Fuck. That's disgusting." She half-muttered to herself and then yelled out, "Baby, clean your floor, it's gross!" She reached down to wipe off what she hoped was water. Whatever it was, it was cold, and it was traveling quickly down her

foot and to her heel. Then she realized it wasn't water at all but tomato juice, spilled all over the floor. She looked down at the cracked, cheap linoleum with a sunset pattern and saw a big size-10 footprint outlined in the juice. On her tip-toes, she managed to reach for the paper towels and started to wipe off her foot. "Babe, come look at my foot," she yelled. "It's all red! And it smells!" She walked with her bare feet into the living room and stopped near the couch. He had gotten up and gone to another room, without telling her. Jerk, she thought. I'm not paying for the pizza with my own money. Stanley was awake and rested on her haunches near the window at the front of the house. Her little tail stuck straight out behind her, and her coarse white hairs stood up. Elizabeth zipped up her fleece sweater and collapsed onto the couch. She picked up the clicker from where it had been left, on the floor, and flipped to HBO, hoping to find some *Sex and the City* reruns.

Then the barking started. It was the kind of barking that reminded her of being 10, and of living next door to that weird psycho, Gary, with the Doberman pinschers. She used to ride her pink Huffy extra fast past his house, white streamers flying behind her and her little heart pounding, while the two Dobermans barked so hard that spit flew through their sharp teeth and through the metal bars holding them back from the street. Looking at Stanley's even little white teeth, she also remembered the time that Gary had stumbled out of his house, piss-drunk and raving mad because she'd accidentally thrown a rock near his dogs. "Intruuuuuder!" He'd yelled, over and over, and over, and over, until she'd run across the cul-de-sac to find her mother.

"Stanley, hush!" she yelled, feeling some pain in her throat as she strained to be heard over the noise. "STANLEY!" The little black and white dog wouldn't stop, though, and Elizabeth sprang from the couch and tackled her playfully. Just before hitting the ground, Elizabeth glimpsed something out of the corner of her eye, a little sliver of something through the cheap white blinds. A girl. A girl in the front yard. A woman, actually—not tall, with light brown skin and hair streaked with cheap store-bought blonde highlights. Her arms were crossed defi-

antly against her faded blue-and-red wind suit, and her mouth moved rapidly. Shaun stood across from her, arms down at his sides, his head cocked attentively to the left. Elizabeth pushed down on the flimsy plastic blinds and felt her stomach dip—no, fall. She squinted and felt the skin tighten around her eyes. The realization sprang up all at once, like water from a fountain; she remembered the fountain at Rolling Oaks Mall as a child that had water spewing from the center like a geyser. She knew all right, she knew. She knew, and now she couldn't unknow. She knew, as she saw the woman's thin lips break into a scowl—remembered—a picture she'd seen on his—her boyfriend's—computer just months before. She's nothing to me, now, baby, nothing. His voice echoed in her head, different sentences intersecting and cutting each other off, and all of a sudden she couldn't breathe very easily, but stood there, frozen, staring at them. Frozen to one spot, completely, without the ability to move. Sheila. Sheila. Sheila. Sheila. The words repeated themselves and mixed with I love you and you've given me so much more than she ever did and Sheila Kirkconnell became I don't want to argue anymore because it hurts me too much, Shaun which bumped into baby, I don't wanna lose you, baby nooooooooo!

The door opened and he came into the house. Outside, the sound of rubber wheels screeching on asphalt became loud, then died out. She thought she even smelled the cooked rubber from outside. For a minute they stared at one another. The carpet underneath her feet felt hot, and prickly. And rough. And there were stains all over it, too. Her shirt stuck to her underarms. A commercial for Linens 'n Things blared obnoxiously loud on the TV behind her, and Stanley happily pounced on the couch, barked playfully, and then began to lick herself all over.

"Why was she here?" The Black Bear hamster he'd bought her for Christmas ran fast on its metal wheel. They'd picked it out together, and they'd spent the entire weekend putting together the plastic blue, red, yellow, orange, and green parts and feeding it little balls that looked like birdseed. Supposed to help its immune system. They doted on the hamster like parents. They'd given it a name, as well—Kitty ran so fast on her wheel that her little feet sometimes got caught in the

metal spokes. He stared at it and he would not look at her face.

"She's asking me for money. No big deal." Elizabeth was holding the little hamster now and her back was to him. The hamster, fat and furry with little white streaks, squeezed through her hands and tried to jump onto the floor.

"For money?"

"That's what I just said, baby, I just said that." He started to walk to the couch. His navy blue pajama pants made a noise like two pieces of paper being rubbed together. He kicked off his black flip flops and dropped onto the worn, sagging cushions, and she picked up the hamster and looked into her little beady black eyes. She made little squeaking noises and after a while bared sharp little white incisors. She put Kitty back into her cage and turned around slowly to face Shaun. He clicked through the TV channels without looking at her. A woman on a news station spoke of high-pressure systems and down sloping winds in Montana and how things were changing across the West and how snow was coming down and the FAA and keep in mind the hundreds of cancelled flights across the country and back to you Aaron and Betty! She dug her toes into the carpet and her hamster started up on the metal wheel again. Using his fingernail, Shaun pretended to be fixing one of the buttons on the remote control that liked to stick. She stepped up to him and tore the remote out of his hand.

"Stop lying to me. Please, just, please, don't lie to me, I can't take it." Her throat felt tight; it almost hurt. She became aware of a fetid smell from the kitchen—pasta left out from the night before—and became nauseated. The image of the woman, thin lips turned into a scowl, popped back into her head. His expression gave away nothing. She searched, looked, peered into his eyes, into that beautiful skin, into those lips, looking for some indication of something, of something, of anything! He swallowed, and she followed his Adam's Apple, thinking maybe it would reveal something. Anything. She felt a little tremor begin around her shoulders. It spread like wildfire up her torso, and sent her jaws into little spasms. The shaking of her jaws made her bite her tongue. She felt more

tears come, and blood too—it traveled slowly, faithfully, down her throat. She opened her mouth to speak and found that for a brief moment all that came out was a pitiful moan. Still, his expression remained stoic. Unresponsive. Unapologetic. Her whole body shook now. She managed to ask the question she dreaded to ask, but must:

"Do you have feelings for her—now? Still?" His expression remained, like a soldier before battle, like a catatonic patient, like a cool businessman, collected. Apathetic. Unemotional. She stood there—fixed—in the middle of the room, on the carpet with a thousand stains, and felt something move inside of her—something dreadful, something final, something ineffably true. She stared at him, at his beautiful almond-shaped eyes, at his torn white POLO shirt, at his pajama pants, and he looked back. And Stanley barked playfully, fully awake now, as Kitty's little feet ran more quickly and spun the wheel faster and faster.

Alison Gregory

## ☼ Ridiculous Dirge

I don't like crocodiles.  
Their cousins, either.  
Would have hated  
Sarcosuchus, the 10-ton  
fiend of prehistory—  
had a nasty 6-foot  
mouth with one hundred  
knives called teeth  
by euphemist advocates  
of mayhem. What mercy  
would the beast have

shown to nut-brained  
stegosaur twins  
                  stumbling  
too close to shoreline?  
Can you contemplate  
the squeals & carnage,  
blood engulfing sea  
& sand, the chunks of  
thigh-&-back  
meat crammed  
into a throbbing  
maw? That's why  
I'd rather not write

a ridiculous dirge  
forced on me  
by cable newsclips  
featuring a Houston



gator unfortunate enough  
to wander onto I-10.  
Was quickly nabbed & tail-  
dragged by a dimwit pickup  
squad intent on removing  
large trash from the pristine  
coast

until boredom  
screaming children  
threat of law  
advised them  
to go ahead  
and shoot  
the son  
of a bitch, by  
then past  
pain anyway  
& leave  
the carcass, cut

loose from their punishing, joy-  
ride truck, to lie  
there, quiet, mutilated,  
a masterpiece highway  
obstruction the police  
were planning  
to investigate.

*Kemp Gregory*

☼ Parallel Universe 503: Tu Fu Munches  
German Rye While Oliver North Narrates  
the Fall of Anzio

Bread-chunk with butter  
consumed, the master vacates  
his bamboo recliner. He'd rather  
converse with the moping  
moon, far from his patio  
glass. "Sixty thousand good  
guys wiped," he sings,  
repeating an utterance  
of Ollie's. "Fair number

of bones," he whispers,  
graying, "but these gung-  
ho recorders should  
read." Reflecting on Huns  
and Himmler the Great, he  
reaches for a meaty census, late  
T'ang, that might make noise at time-

warp conventions in Cairo  
(3 Egypts away from Old  
Earth). "Can't ask the acned  
moon a damn thing," he mutters.  
"Too weepy for drunken  
Li Po." Tomorrow he'll broach  
the subject with Client-Centered  
Sun: what point, why show  
that the sword, in a virtual  
heartbeat, subtracted 30 million from China  
while patriot warlords performed?

*Kemp Gregory*

☞ In or out of the Lit Class:  
A Point Worth Noting

How many  
have noticed—have pondered—  
the end of *Lord*  
*of the Flies*?  
The boys flee hells  
of island & self—poor  
Piggy, alas—through  
the excellent offices of English  
gentleman who seem to appear  
from nowhere, Aeschylan style.  
But the rescue  
ship (& its commissioned tear-jerking  
stars to whom the lads  
are beholden) is engaged  
in a secret Big Clash  
of its own. In the outer  
circle, if you will. Well, well,

William: your finest move,  
indeed, better than the lush  
descriptions of succulent pork  
served up as savage  
barbeque for whitebread

carnivores; or the twisted visions  
of Simon (the *wunderkind* saint-  
rock); or those repulsive  
groupie insects attending a tight host  
of young Satans. Bill—I've become  
intimate—thank you  
for this masterful *Treasure*  
*Island* turn. Those kids were saved  
for a purpose you chuckled  
about (didn't you?) and hid:  
Greater Destruction  
awaits us. As a matter  
of course. If there be

any reader of this note,  
fly-  
bottled & lost  
at sea, pluck it,  
matey, from the salt—it's Gold—  
& take it to Serling's  
John Silver Swiss Bank, the choice  
of gunshy Iraqi admirals debating  
retirement from the Ocean of  
Sand.

*Kemp Gregory*

## ☞ Phone Calls

When my brother madboy was missing  
in action, summer and fall, '61,  
mother would jump each time  
the phone rang, hoping, fearful,  
at once. After he'd scraped an arsenic  
omelet into the glistening sink, threatening,  
in his undershirt, to kill us, he vanished

from family breakfast. For months  
we heard nothing. Then, before lunch  
on a Thursday, we think, his picture  
having long disappeared from the evening  
screen, a call from Judge Whoever  
in Philly, where a vagrant son  
with the Gregory name had been

caught roaming bad streets, ranting  
about the recently crowned Maria  
Beale Fletcher. My mother's hands  
shook so hard she could barely  
hold the phone. He was flown  
back—at Philly's expense—for  
an autumn

reunion. Gaunt, bright-  
eyed, forgiving, he regaled us with sagas  
of wandering, flophouse existence, free  
sandwich luck, the stacked American Queen  
he'd hitchhiked 400 miles to worship,  
that fateful South Jersey fork taking him  
far west of Atlantic City. Mesmerized  
kin gushed primitive

yeas for the safe return of their raconteur  
prodigal. By Christmas  
he was roaming the halls in Raleigh  
with mumblers who played  
strands of sunlight like scattered  
strings of a mournful cello & shuffled,  
  
shuffled, dragging the cells of their bodies  
behind. In and out  
from there, for the rest  
of his Thorazine life-  
sentence, to which I  
was a younger  
dream witness. But the world

grows lighter with age, we know.  
For example, phone fears learned  
early may ease as the years themselves  
lose weight. This Sunday, less  
than an hour ago, 3 phones—upstairs  
and down—sounded the same alarm:  
who's calling at 7AM?

Reassurance is a lovely reward:  
after knocking cups to the floor,  
I was calm. No madboy, no judge,  
no yawning nurse to  
startle with late-  
breaking news: your mother  
is dying, or dead.

*Kemp Gregory*

## ☼ The Battle of Baghdad

They lined up east of the Euphrates.  
Godzilla, staggering, dizzy on speed,  
& Kong, turbaned, dripping essence  
of Baal. To start the engagement,  
Godzilla raised his scaly  
arm—tattooed from pinkie to tricep  
with the awesome letters GI.  
Kong responded with flowery  
grunts which the sky translated  
for towering G—& was he ever  
pissed when he caught the gist  
of K's contempt. At that moment,

air power emerged from eons,  
future, past, & the two weak  
bastards managed to transform  
earth, wind, etc., forever  
with their rapid, mutual destruction.  
Fragments of material that resembled  
bodies have been sent to nearby  
worlds for close inspection by beings  
with a modicum of sense. But in the box  
of your head (please open), the pre-verdict's  
already revealed. God has used  
a curious term: I believe

He called it Suicide.

*Kemp Gregory*

⌘ Disgruntled Vet at the Open Air/ "Fluid"  
Festival of Modern Warfare: Exhibits  
of Military Jargon & Such

1)

Looting in the wings?  
That's theater  
for you.

2)

Case after case  
of collateral  
damage stacked  
on gurneys  
& stretchers: the result  
of brilliant bombs  
married up  
w/ dumb  
people

3)

Check out the Serta  
Assisted Living  
Facility for softened  
enemy troops—  
fogies call it

a morgue

4)

Here's a full-screen



still cartoon  
starring 2 generals  
from opposing camps.  
General A (extending  
a leprous hand) asks  
General B; "How  
have you been

attritted?

5)

Yum, yum, JDAM  
breakfast spread  
—it's red—  
we love  
raspberry  
ordnance!

6)

Oh, those  
are simply weird  
stickers on folks  
who like sleep  
—not massive wounds  
on the dead.  
Negative.

7)

Jeder's favorite  
is the Purple Heart  
pan dulce  
display.  
But samples  
are few, cost  
plenty

8)

Speaking of expensive:  
what price  
grand old flags  
draped over  
body bags?

9)

dog tags scattered  
  
everywhere,  
echoes  
in place  
  
of owners

*Kemp Gregory*

⌘ *The Life and Death of Planet Earth*: Tuning in  
Late to Donald Brownlee's Book Talk, Via C-  
Span, from Portland

So even under the best  
of conditions, the ball we're on  
& the solar system into which  
it's been tossed are ultimately  
toast. I tuned in late to your  
Q&A, doctor, my  
apologies, & I'm hardly a physics  
master, besides. However, I am over 50  
percent convinced I absorbed your message

rightly. I suppose we could argue  
about the pop metaphor "toast"—  
whether it's a kind of McTrivial  
move, making space-time mystery  
a munchable treat. Sorry again  
if I've spoiled the research  
party & reduced your cheerful  
comment about robotic transfer  
of egg & sperm to zero. & toast,

when rendered inedible, is usually  
burned. It was unclear—I tuned in  
late, you recall—whether our doomed bread-  
ball will crack teeth (too cold) or  
sing the collective tongue (too  
hot). In fact, my Cartesian computer  
(mind) can't produce a single hard

piece of data from the Chef's Show  
for Simpletons I sampled on C-Span. As soon as I  
finish verse paragraphs not a soul is presently  
reading, I will rise & contact  
Conglomerate Bookstore to order  
a copy of your witty tome. I pray  
it will help us go more  
gently—since war, for example,  
is finite. I will rise, make  
coffee, and reach for the phone while picturing  
whopper slices of non-sugared, worthless rye.

*Kemp Gregory*

## ❧ Dachau

Here the grounds are beautiful and terrible—  
the blood dances in the trees,  
on the stones; it  
lies sprawled, exposed, in the  
courtyard; it fills in the infirmary,  
clogs the barracks  
wets my shoes and they leave tracks in it.

The community showers show their dead, hanged  
naked from white ceiling beams and  
the brown ovens melt skin  
until bones become their coals.

My blood trickles to meet  
the honored officer who  
holsters his weapon; and

on my knees, a final, fleeting vision  
dressed in dreams and veiled in satin,  
barely upright before the ditch of many dead  
unknown thousands staring into the black,

the strangest thing:  
the black squirrels dance above on the limbs, and  
far from the bleeding cries, from the madness of shots  
misfired or connecting,

behind the wall the trees mend their leaves, and  
the crushed peaches in the grass  
hide their face

*Mathew Gregory*

## ✿ On Passing Dylan Thomas' House

I sought splendor and found paint instead, and  
the door, a pale wedding ending too early

the lawn,

a plot in small existence.

High-structured and white, in tall peace and  
glamorous small sympathies, like bare breeze  
on a peaked runner's cheek, flushed blue  
with blood.

I turned around to die  
just then, no longer in love,  
my heart, a widowed and romanceless  
grave for words

*Matthew Gregory*

✿ Pigeons

Don't move—  
stay perched, your  
head inside your wing

I'm only here  
to write about you

*Matthew Gregory*

## ☿ The Melody and Harmony of Dysfunction

I remember the first time my blood danced like steel, the first time my veins vibrated with wood and flesh. It was my father's bent head, his hair running with brown, and his reverent, encircling fingers clutching his late father's guitar that pricked me. In his plain and white-buttoned work shirt and his old black pants, he labored, his neck down like a crane's, to watch his fingers dance. I remember thinking how I would never get it, how hard it seemed, and how very much I wanted to be good at it. To tell this story is to trace the lineage of my descent into schoolyard debauchery, to crack wide and examine the womb that birthed me. In short, it was this very scene with my father that was my metamorphosis.

When I speak of a metamorphosis, though, I must differentiate between a change of heart and a change of body. I changed mentally, yes, but also very physically and in the sense that the guitar began to feed off me and I off of it in a strange symbiosis. I only came upon the guitar by accident, as a teen with nothing to do but dream of exploiting his genitals to ready females. My parents bought me a guitar one day, and it became my bedfellow. In what seemed like a short time, I took root with my instrument. No, no, I'm not joking—it very literally happened. It's a strange feeling to wake up one morning and find yourself naked and sweating and stuck, like glue, to a guitar. Strange indeed. I threw back my covers that morning and found my guitar fastened, no, cemented is a better word, to my pelvic region. It covered my most vital male organs, I noticed; the large hole in it that I used to lose my pick in engulfed my entire manhood. It appeared I had slept on this guitar, or in it, and there was no coming out of it. This was beginning to be a problem, as I had to use the bathroom and attend to my normal life. I sprung from my bed, naked as the wild, with this chained instrument clanging the bedposts as I rose, and made my way outside of my room and to the top of the stairs. It was early in the morning and my parents were awake brewing coffee downstairs. I could hear their jovial conversations about the goings-on in the world, and I could smell some sort of food being cooked in the oven. I then realized I had to relieve myself in the worst way. I had trouble entering the bathroom because the horizontal length of the guitar barred my way in. I



had to turn so that the guitar pointed with its head the way in—an uncomfortable sideways entry. I locked the door behind me and looked in the tall mirror before me. What the hell had happened? What was wrong with me? I was the same person, yes, but the guitar my parents had bought me half-covered my lower abdomen and entirely covered my manhood. How, then, was I to use the bathroom? I began trying in the usual way, by relaxing the muscles I knew I could relax in my bladder as I aimed the head of the guitar at the toilet. I didn't know what I was doing, really, so I just guessed. The strangest thing happened, though. As I was relaxing and all of the while fearing leakage onto the floor, I noticed that this guitar seemed to be filling up. Yes, it was filling, and steadily, so much so that I was fast becoming imbalanced. To my disgust, the guitar was now full of my urine, and I had no idea what to do with it. The door being locked, I had time to consider my options. Scream? No. Perhaps crack the guitar open, break it, and clean up afterwards? No. My parents had bought this for me, had spent their hard-earned money on me, and that would be wrong. That would look ungrateful. The answer all of a sudden came to me. Why yes, of course, why had I not considered it before? I would simply loosen the tuning pegs on the guitar, give them a twist to the left or right, and the liquid would come deftly spilling out. My hands did the work and my body was relieved. I loosened the pegs slightly, and a yellow stream came pouring out through the loosened holes the pegs had revealed. How hard that had seemed before! If this was so easy, perhaps eating and playing and functioning normally like this was easy. Naked still, I drew back the bathroom door and headed downstairs into the rattling and scraping of dishes. I entered the kitchen a little unsure of myself, and stood until my parents recognized me.

"Hello, Son," said my mother.

"Have some eggs, Son," said my father.

They appeared not to notice the guitar. I sat down at the table and began eating. The eggs tasted great that morning, better than they ever had, like the perfect combination of salt and butter. My parents also did not notice the great

clamor the table made as my guitar ravished it as I sat down. Each bite I took sent the table vibrating as the guitar underneath, too big to be silenced, banged up against its underside. My mother read the paper and my father fixed his tie. There was a spot on it. My mother had laid my clothes out for school and told me to get into them. I said that I didn't think I could fit into clothes any longer. She said that was okay. My father said he would drive me to school that day as he always had. I finished the eggs and drank a glass of milk and brushed my teeth in the downstairs bathroom, naked. My father and I went out to the car. It had just rained, and the grass was wet with dew. It felt cold to my feet as my feet crinkled it. It was a good feeling, though. We drove a great green van, decrepit, and we got into it. My father got in first and turned on the heat, as it was chilly out. The leather seats were torn to the cotton underneath them, and they were cold as well. I opened the passenger door wide and placed my right hand on the dashboard of the inside of the car. I was leaning in to do this, and the guitar was making it hard to enter the car. I had to use the previous bathroom maneuver where I turned myself sideways and entered. This method, it appeared, was universal for all points of entry. I closed the passenger door and my father started the car. As we backed out of the driveway, I watched our house roll away from vision. It looked nice that day, clean and wet with soft rain, peaceful.

My father dropped me off in the parking lot of my high school, as was the custom, and I gave him a kiss on the forehead, as was custom as well.

"Have a good day in school, Son," he said.

"I will," I said.

He drove away and I began my walk into the school building. The parking lot was hard and gravelly under my feet, a bit uncomfortable, so I took my time. I walked slowly, and then I remembered again that I was naked and with a new apparatus strapped to my midsection and genitals. This was a strange but not altogether painful realization. Students began to arrive *en masse* in the parking lot, their piercings shining from their irreverent bodies. After a minute the school parking lot was one full green tattoo and piercing. I had arrived a bit early on

campus, so I was ahead of everyone else. Students began to file in behind me as we neared the building. I started to sweat a little here. Did they notice I was naked? Did they notice my guitar? If they did, they kept it to themselves, for they said nothing. Actually, people seemed quite indifferent to my predicament. One girl walked right past me, even bumped the rear of my guitar, and kept going, unbothered. Apparently no one cared. This was good, very good. I entered the school's wide, double doors with ease and slipped into the air conditioning of the building. Administrators were dressed sharply, impeccably, as they combed the hallways for students without hall passes. I made my way through the hallway, almost unnoticed, until one of them stopped me.

"Excuse me, do you have a hall pass?"

"No sir, I don't" was all I could think to say.

"Well, seeing as you're here early, you must be a good student. I'm going to let you ride on this one."

"Thank you, sir."

He also seemed unaware that I was utterly naked and had a guitar attached to my body. This was great. My parents didn't notice, my own fellow students didn't notice, the school administrators didn't notice. Perhaps it was better with this guitar like this. Yes, better. As I made my approach to the classroom door, I had a brief fantasy where girls would want me sexually because of my guitar. Yes, they would come to me; they would fling themselves upon me, begging me. And I would not disappoint them.

I quietly drew back the door of my first class. The class was empty, it seemed, except for one girl. How strange was she! To my surprise and delight, she was entirely naked, seated at her desk in the back of the room. She was a beautiful dirty blonde wonder, with hair down to her mid-back. She sat with her arms crossed, impatiently, it seemed. She must be a new student, I thought. Being the friendly person that I was, I took my place next to her in the back of the room. It was the science room we were in, the biology lab, and the two of us were behind rows of Bunsen burners and test tubes. When I sat down, I noticed the oddest

thing. Not only was she extremely beautiful and naked, but she, too, had an apparatus like me. Her appendage appeared quite similar to mine in placement. It was attached to her mid-abdomen and was both protruding from and covering her genitals. I was no band specialist, but I said to myself that her apparatus was, for sure, a woodwind. I debated silently for a moment as to just what kind of woodwind it was until I blurted out,

"Excuse me, but—"

"Yes, I'm new."

"Your—"

"Yes, new. I'll be here the rest of the year."

"Oh. Might I inquire as to the status of your woodwind?" I said as politely as I could.

"Excuse me?" she said, a bit confused.

"Yes, uh, it would appear that you have a woodwind extending from your genital area."

"A woodwind? I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about."

I became flushed at this moment, for I had just showed my hand, had laid my cards out, and a bit too early, it seemed.

"I don't exactly know how to ask what I'm asking; rather, I don't even know what I'm asking. Maybe you could be of some help?"

She stared at me blankly for a moment, then appeared to lighten up, as if with an idea.

"Oh, you are referring to the clarinet that grows out of my vagina?" she said rather brusquely, I thought.

"Well, since you've said it outright . . . yes."

"Ah. I woke up this morning and well, here it was!" Just kind of attached, if you will, down there."

"Is that right? You know, we appear to be of the same experience, for you see, I, too, woke up this morning with an instrument forged to my body."

"Oh? And what instrument might that be?"

"A guitar. Here, have a look for yourself." I showed her how my guitar was attached to my body, and as I did so, I noticed a certain heat grow within my body, a certain passion, that began.

"Oh, yes, you certainly do have a guitar strapped to your stomach and genital region." She said this sweetly, though I began to think that this girl was very forward.

"Are you in band?" I asked her.

"Yes, I play the clarinet. Well, I did, until it got stuck in the most unfortunate of places," she said.

"Ah, yes, so it's a clarinet that grows from you."

"Yes, and a most lovely guitar that grows from you." She smiled at me as she said this. She was indeed beautiful, and it appeared that her beauty was having an effect on me.

"Well, it was nice meeting you," I said, "and I hope that we may become friends—"

"Pardon me for being forward, but would you like to engage in sexual intercourse?"

I was taken aback, astonished. Of course I wanted to, but there were the obvious problems. I tried to articulate my feelings to her.

"You see, in the most physical sense, I would very much like to participate in sexual discovery with you, but seeing as a guitar obscures my manhood and a clarinet blocks your . . . you know, it would be most impossible, I'm afraid."

"Oh, I think not," she said. This girl was definitely very forward.

"And as a matter of fact, we're going to make it work," she said.

I was once again mortified at her brash talk of sex, and I stammered, "But we're in school and—"

Before I could finish my thought, she pulled me down to her, behind the Bunsen burners and the test tubes and the beakers. Believe it or not, we were having sex. And what wonderful sex it was. It was the magical, ridiculous sex of two instruments playing in key, my melody complementing her harmony and vice

versa. I don't know how it worked. It just did. No sooner had we begun our journey than an administrator walked in.

"Hey, you two aren't doing homework back there, are you?"

"Excuse us, sir, but we're writing a report. It's on the history of the English language since the Nordic invasion," I said.

"Ah, a fine topic. I remember my own youth, and I remember being fascinated with English and all of its facets—"

We were no longer listening. We were too busy making music, creating lovely melodies interwoven in our own disjointed harmony.

*Matthew Gregory*

☞ 5-1-02

Her great company  
her wonderful patience  
stay, don't go away

My piece of shit dog  
running around in circles,  
he is retarded

My little sister  
she is annoying as ever,  
I gotta love her

*Jason Grochala*

## ⌘ Situation V

The warm sunrays on these great days, the soft sand underneath your feet, the sound of waves breaking, the smell of the ocean in the air. The cool breezy nights walking hand and hand on the boardwalk, the lights of games, the sounds of the spinning wheels, going by, the pop of the balloon, there's another winner. The smells of funnel cake and pizza pies, a full moon in the sky, wishing you were back to five, you could go on those rides. Eating French-Fries, with a small coke, Time passes by, The night comes close to the end, New Jersey.

*Jason Grochala*



## ☞ THE PERSON

I want to know you. I want to know who you are. I want to know the reasons when people ask why. I want to know what eats you up inside. I want to know why when you break down and cry. I want to know the memories. I want to know the dreams behind your eyelids. I want to know your beating heart, I want to know where to start. I want to know your stretch marks, I want to know about your bumps and bruises. I want to know the laughter, I want to know the joy, I want to know when a tear drops. I want to know your redblood, I want to know the pain of your cut. I want to know your smiles, I want to know the twinkle in your pretty eye. I want to know the dimples on your face. I want to know the person from the inside out.

*Jason Grochala*

## ☿ Zodiac

My mother was a Gemini, lefthanded,  
with a fuddled brain and a lazy-eyed dyslexia  
inherited from generations of illiterate  
Scotch-Irishmen who nonetheless were clever  
with their hands.

Black man-sized silhouettes  
against a clear blue sky, these were the men  
who seemed to walk on air above the ground,  
their hammers pounding rolls of tin into  
sheet metal roofing for the poor, the tired  
failed farmers who could not afford gray slate  
or riven cypress shingles overhead.

Great-uncle Tom  
claimed to have invented metal windmills  
but that was probably a lie, a Texas boast, a joke  
the grownups played on little children  
whom he liked to fondle on the sly.  
His daughters wore cheap cotton skirts and blouses,  
washed out, rumpled, with the names  
of bowling teams embroidered on the pockets.  
Even I could see they were not really city-slicker  
bowling champs but Archie Bunkers in disguise.

His daughters,  
mussed, exhausted from the long bus ride,  
had come to take him home to Texas, where he died,  
his secret clenched behind false teeth.  
His charming chuckle and his mild blue eyes  
still haunt my dreams in August when the moon  
sails too close by. And I still hear my mother hissing

"Don't tell your father! He will kill him.  
He will kill him . . . " and she starts to cry.

*Kathryn Bright Gurkin*

## ☿ Film Noir

Bad dreams come more frequently with age.  
It is like watching bad home movies  
nobody wants to see again. I groan  
and let the pictures roll all night, it seems,  
although I know that actual dreamtime  
is a fraction of the time we sleep.

This is my life, what's left of it, what's gone before.  
How shall I make peace with so much chaos?  
There is a chasm cut between me and the old emotions,  
a numbing and impersonal attention given  
to dramas that unreel before me endlessly—  
soundless, without titles, credits, cast or stars.  
Men and women walk about with open mouths,  
speechless, insatiable. I have forgotten who they are.  
Trains, cars, silvery jet airplanes on their way to Vegas,  
rockets on their way to Mars loom, glittering,  
to fill the frames with speed and menace.  
I am not amused.

This is no driveling Disneyland but Hell  
as Milton might imagine it if Milton had been steeped  
in cinema—blind Milton in his darkness dazzled  
by the vision of light, the vast unbridgeable rift  
between bright Satan and his God,  
the throne of God receding but still towering  
above the pit of darkness that is memory,  
regret, the vast cold distances of stars.

*Kathryn Bright Gurkin*

☿ BIRDS OF ASHES

ashes  
ashes  
birds of ashes  
birds of ashes trying to take flight

nothing

is

connected  
nothing is permanently connected

Ash birds can take flight

but,

in so doing,

lo(o)se themselves.

Those which were wholes

are

now

many

smaller

wholes,

not replicas of from what they came.

No, love, we are not all fragments of a Supreme Being

for, if we are,

it no longer is and,

therefore, it never was supreme.

Love, we are fragments of fragments ready to fragment.

Collectively, you might say,  
we are one. One supreme Being of Pain.

I am afraid, my love,  
afraid that I am going sane,  
afraid that  
the world is one big bird of ashes  
that will never take to flight.

*Jeremy Halinen*

☞ SMILE

"Smile," you say.

I eye the creases  
between your fore and upper arms  
scowl against space.

*Jeremy Halinen*

☿ COMFORT

i.

to listen to my heart's beat  
my ear to my chest

that i will never do that  
is my chief pre-regret

ii.

take off my head  
press it to my heart

i will listen

*Jeremy Halinen*



☞ VAN GOGH

They wrapped the fish  
in Hokusai in Japan  
and made the landscape literal  
with words to tie the meaning down  
or set it free, composed  
and tranquil, not a hint of  
madness in the sky.

In 1890, May-July  
Van Gogh in a surfeit of tension  
made 70 paintings  
in 70 days, then shot himself  
and somebody rich in Japan  
has paid 83.5 million  
for the portrait of the doctor  
who watched his mind  
like a kettle of fish.

Our wonderful world  
is water, said Thales  
and everything in it  
is water. In Pergamon or  
the libraries of Alexandria  
even the thought of the word water  
was thirst quenching. Thirst  
is the opposite of water  
as Japan is the opposite  
of the West Coast—separated by water—  
brought together by water.

Van Gogh in a desperate energy  
thought paint, spilled  
paint, shaped paint  
till the burgeoning fields  
outside Auvers-sur-Oise  
and the visage of Dr Gachet  
were both buckets of paint  
and the sun burned as bright  
as a Catherine wheel  
in a sky that was suddenly  
famous as water, and scarred the eye.

*Ken Hanson*

☞ THE MEDITERRANEAN COCKROACH

Unlike the katydid  
it sings no song  
though cousin.  
Unlike the nightingale.

Unlike the Egyptian dung beetle  
prototypical Sisyphus  
of pointless action, scarab.  
Unlike the coelocanth.

Henna'd and shellacked, it shines  
against the avocado tiles  
when the light comes on  
then runs for cover  
under or behind. It lives

wherever you'd expect it to  
and then some. Built to last  
it would survive a full  
scale nuclear disaster, so they say.  
I'd kill it if I could.

Today I saw one flat on its back  
on the kitchen tiles  
surrounded by ten thousand  
myrmidons, formicidae  
all feeding on the juices  
leaving just the carapace.

Uncertain—as the dawn

came up like thunder—  
whether to take the long view  
or the short, I swept it up  
like emptiness, surviving.

Or like fame.  
Fame cheats the tomb  
I thought, if briefly.  
Fame knows its way around.

*Ken Hanson*

## ⌘ Two Moral Poems

I

Once the frog  
who's been kissed into being a prince  
comes to see that it wasn't for him  
but was something the palace wanted—  
they needed a prince, he longs for  
the cool woozy honest liquidity  
of the pond. "Some people,"  
said the princess, "are unwilling  
to be grateful." Grateful, grateful  
grateful, the great bell swung—  
you are tied to my tongue.

II

And the cormorant stood  
at the rail of the wooden boat  
waiting to catch a fish for  
somebody else, and the cormorant  
thought, in the struggle  
between the river and the rocks  
I'm on the side of the rocks  
and the fisherman thought  
O happy cormorant, to be doing  
what you want, and the fish  
with a sigh and a whisper  
thought, fuck you.

*Ken Hanson*

## ✿ Sex and the Christmas Tree

Like those unfortunates  
who must resort to a therapist  
to get it up, I box  
and un-box every year  
the plastic Christmas tree  
imported from Taiwan  
and read approximate English  
to find out which part goes here  
and which part there.

And then the tinsel and the bells  
and the sound of "The Little Drummerboy"  
once more a heartbeat on the radio.

O what would Christmas be  
without music? Quieter, I guess  
like something just before a heart attack  
or after sex, when having followed  
the printed instructions to a T  
you wait for emptiness  
and what comes next,  
and then it does, the famous  
"tristia est," traditional  
but faint, exactly as promised.

*Ken Hanson*

## ☼ Anniversary Photo

In this photograph  
in bleached light  
he is crossing the bridge.  
There is nothing to stop him.  
Sun, stone, tree, house  
all sing to the atmosphere.  
What is he carrying, gift-wrapped?  
It is labeled the present.  
He puts it down and sits on it  
exactly the way he remembers  
the islander on Yap sat  
on his swollen testicles grown  
twice the size of bowling balls  
as a result of whatever that  
rude disease was, as he smiled  
at the photographer when  
photographs were all  
the color of his own skin—sepia,  
the palm tree behind him sepia  
the sea in the distance sepia.  
Now, they're in varying  
shades of gray, called black and white  
or they mimic faithfully  
the colors of nature, as some  
butterflies do, given  
eons enough to learn how.  
In this photograph he pauses  
as he is crossing the bridge.  
There are no special colors.  
Perhaps it is black and white.

Perhaps it is just the light.  
Now he seems to be thinking of  
how to move on. Now he seems  
to be thinking of something else.

*Ken Hanson*



## ☞ A Bowl of Cherries

Jeremy Bentham's head  
rests now between his knees  
in a hatbox, in London.  
With what equanimity the great  
face destiny, what calm.  
So too, Phar Lap, Australia's  
greatest racehorse, stuffed  
and standing in the National  
Museum in Melbourne  
its greatest attraction.  
What desperate ambition  
to preserve, to keep, hold on.  
Napoleon's eyeballs, like quails' eggs  
in salt solution or in alcohol  
somewhere in Europe, where?  
Corbière, plucked from a sidewalk  
bookstall, scraps of Sappho  
used to wrap Egyptian mummies—  
who remembers now, the bodies  
wrapped? Odds are, in time, whatever  
we may plan or say, what's kept  
will not be what we bargained for—  
not Shelley's flaming heart  
popped like a turnip from  
the funeral pyre nor English lords  
shipped home from India in casks  
of port or claret, nothing left  
to wither where it fell  
nor those more private parts  
hacked off, perhaps by accident

penis and scrotum taken  
by some visitor from where  
the ice-man lay 5,000 years  
and more, frozen in Alpine ice  
before a change of weather  
found him out. Bone, gristle  
grist, like all the rest of us  
apparently he never knew  
what hit him, then or now.  
An unmistakable, mysterious  
blue tattoo behind his left knee  
plus the oldest haircut known to man  
a lucky find, they said—almost  
complete, before they wrapped his  
almost all in a plastic sheet  
and froze him back again  
in Innsbruck, hoping in this way  
at last, to learn what made him tick.

*Ken Hanson*

⌘ Aegina

This is myself on my balcony.  
Most of what's there on the balcony  
like a half-truth is not within range  
of the camera, which is focused instead  
on the brick wall of the building going up  
on what was last year a vacant lot.  
I am looking at the camera dead-center  
which is where you are, or where  
you would be if you were there.  
The camera is telling me smile  
but that is not in my nature.  
It is in my nature to look thoughtful  
which is a bit like a vacant lot  
before there's a building.  
Last year there were thousands of poppies.  
Now you hear workmen singing.  
I used to believe, Greek workmen  
didn't know how to whistle  
because I only heard them singing.  
I used to believe, when they danced  
with their arms out straight  
going into a trance to spin  
like a plane almost out of control  
in an early movie, they were truly alone—  
but to dance the zembekiko  
is like breaking plates, you must do it  
in public, with everyone watching  
while you pretend not to know they

are watching and they pretend not  
to know you are dancing for them.  
In the movies you see them  
at tables there, quiet for once  
while the dancer dances—  
he is rarely the star of the film.  
Here, in front of the camera  
I am holding a Japanese painting—  
three aubergines in a vacancy, a *sumi*  
which is meant to remind you  
of what is missing—"Persimmons"  
by Mu Ch'i, and there is a *waka*  
inscribed on it, though the script  
is too small and too delicate to show up  
in a photo taken from so far away.  
"Each eggplant grows on its own stem,"  
the *waka* says, and "the eggplant is third."  
I am not looking at the painting  
where this is written, though I know  
the writing is there, a reminder  
of something else missing—  
"Fujiyama is first, then the falcon  
the eggplant third"—a saying.  
Here, in a kind of enclosure  
I'm standing on my balcony  
in front of the vanishing point

*Ken Hanson*

## ❀ A Note on Aegina

"Persimmons" by Mu-ch'i is one of the most famous *sumi*'s in the world. It is kept in a Buddhist temple (Ryoko-in, Daitoku-ji) in Kyoto, and it is on view only one day per year—in March, I believe. I have never seen the original, which measures 35 x 29 cm. It dates from the mid 13th century. By some it is thought to be a complete work, and for them it is a Zen statement of wishful and transcendent values. By others it is thought to be a fragment of a larger work, and for them it is a Zen representation of the fact that persimmons are delectable and pleasant to eat. The *sumi* shows five persimmons, of varying intensities. There is no table, there are no plates, there is no tree. The persimmons are not globular but rather have the shape of persimmons, which is to say they are slightly flattened, top and bottom, as if from the force of gravity, although they rest on nothing.

The reproduction of the *sumi* in the photo in the poem was sent to me by a friend, from Paris. It is by Kamo No Suetaka (1751-1842). The *sumi* itself measures 43 x 32 cm, about the same as Mu-ch'i's, but with mat and a thin frame it measures 57 x 82 cm. It shows three aubergines, a loss of two objects in the five centuries, but of course it has gained the *waka*, a poem which Mu-ch'i's *sumi* lacked. The aubergines have the shape of aubergines, pear-shape or egg-shape, and are of a single, singular intensity. The calligraphy to the left is like gossamer, spun the atmosphere, a diffusion to balance solidity, wisps against aubergines solid as rock, which rest on nothing.

The zembekiko is a dance in place, fettered and free,  
which gathers intensity and then gives up. It spins  
slowly to its own disaster, which is pointless. Like  
gossamer. Like vacancy. It rests on nothing. It can be  
repeated. It ends when you think it has ended. It  
starts when you feel like beginning.

*Ken Hanson*

## ✿ On Buying an Icon

Murderous, guileful, wise  
the eyes of the shopkeeper  
follow you. We have very  
many, he says—what saint  
would you like? All of these  
are hand-made. Saint George

on horseback, hard-eyed  
is lancing a dragon who  
seems to be asking for it.  
Do not mistake him for  
Saint Dimitrios, equally  
hard-eyed on horseback  
skewering a heathen  
who looks like a dragon  
for which he is honored now  
in Salonika, home of the  
Trade Fair in August. Less

distinguished perhaps but  
no less a saint, Minás  
on what looks like the same  
horse, is casting his eyes  
up to heaven as he gets  
himself set to impale a  
leopard, snarling and open  
mouthed—entranced as  
the saint is. And these  
as the shopkeeper says  
are only a few. In the dark

at the back of the shop  
are the more authentic,  
saints who have suffered  
from wormwood and dust who  
have nothing in mind  
but you, and whose price  
has gone up accordingly.  
They hope, without hope  
for the best, and their eyes  
soft as antelopes' follow  
you never surprised as you  
walk through the doorway  
not buying.

*Ken Hanson*



## ☞ Table with Objects

That day was rain, and a cat  
named Emerson whose fur  
was black as human nature  
but whose heart was pure

as he made his way sure  
footed among the bric-a-brac  
on the coffee table, ginseng  
root, the crystal pyramid

a souvenir of Paris and the photo  
of your late grand-uncle  
charismatic, next to the pseudo-  
Sung dynasty blue pot

declined by Sotheby's  
(late 19th century). Those  
were the days, and Emerson  
four feet in the real world

Margaret Fuller finally though  
reluctantly "accepted" having  
stubbed her toe against it  
(rock) affectionate knew

pedigrees a hawk  
from a handsaw. Things of  
the world are as they are  
and should be left that way

some false some fraudulent  
some make believe, a ginseng root  
or Tiger Balm. You keep  
your distance, cut it close

no sticky fingered merging  
followed by abandonment  
or fattened, swaggering off.  
Let be. Respectful Emerson

knew each thing edged  
the pot intact, its transcendental  
blue a matter of opinion  
(blue), the photo of your uncle

as he was or wasn't, framed  
still, life approximate  
the memory is like that, touches  
nothing as it circles all

the feast is moveable, a day  
in the country a spoon a skull  
a part nocturnal animal  
transfixed by light.

*Ken Hanson*

## ☿ At My Grandfather's Funeral

This is the chair  
in the house I grew up in  
this is the chair  
without me in it

this is the house where  
the first thing I remember  
is my grandfather saying  
you're lucky we took you in  
the house where on holidays  
the wind-up phonograph  
played Climb Upon my Knee  
Sonny Boy and I'd cry  
as Al Jolson's famous New York  
nasal voice a family favorite  
drilled into the farthest  
corners even into the closet  
with the door shut

house where my cat Old Tom  
got caught taking chickens  
from the neighbor's yard  
and my grandfather shot him dead  
with a 12 gauge  
and buried him under a rock  
the house where the wind  
on a cool night gathered  
the curtains like daisies  
house where the cedar wax-wings  
stopped on migration

year after year to feed  
on fermented apples  
black on the tree  
the house where the caged bluejay  
said Floy Floy your mama wants you  
Floy Floy from the back porch  
if you cut its tongue

this was the house where I  
practiced becoming a vacancy  
trying to be both there and not  
the house where I promised myself  
never ever to grow up  
ever the house  
where luckier than most  
in the middle of nowhere  
one day I did

*Ken Hanson*

⌘ Road Song: Lone Rider

*after Yen T'iao-Yu*

Long road  
red dust  
sweaty horse

who can wash off  
the long road's  
red dust

Some say  
autumn rain  
is deplorable

me—  
autumn rain  
pour down!

*Ken Hanson*

☿ GEOLOGY

Rock says to me  
see how I draw light to myself  
without effort,  
feel how I am warm  
long after sun goes down.

Rock says to me  
see how the water parts  
around my substance  
see how  
I join the dance  
without moving.

Rock says to me  
feel how my weight  
shelters fragile things  
in storm  
feel how my weight  
anchors me to earth  
in great winds.

Rock says to me  
sister, it is easy  
to become  
like me  
if you only  
stop  
trying.

*Nancy A. Henry*

☺ 2 a.m.

it's 2 a.m.

1978

775 St. Charles Avenue Atlanta

GA

and "i'm

**talking 'bout my  
generation"**

of fresh horses underneath facepaint

and feathers

and life was new

we were more patti smith than patty duke

more costello than presley elvis

more black mountain than beat

more cage

than ginsberg

more roxy

than cassidy

more young than old

more hopeful

then

at 2 a.m.

and life opened like a new country

like a border ride of unbroken chain

like fresh sense of smell and smoke

with a wild horse language spoken

we spoke

and time stood still  
and time moved on  
and around  
and around

now it's 2 a.m. again  
but 1998  
and this time i'm climbing  
London's Highgate  
Cemetery walls  
to beg forgiveness at  
Karl Marx's grave

because we got it all messed up  
we forgot that history is not product  
and government not commodity  
and politics is human process  
race is artificial construct  
and life is not an end

but i am beginning to be tired of all this horse shit  
we are left with here  
like the new wave  
gone  
permanent wave  
gone  
alternative  
my ass  
rock of misogynistic rap instead of marvin gaye



***"what's going on?"***

but it was '78 then  
and the first man i ever saw cry was my friend Larry  
and i put my arms around him by the lake that day  
and i didn't know what to say  
i was too young to know  
that he was black  
i was white  
i was straight/he was gay  
or that some day  
we'd forget  
what could kill us was bigger than love

and today  
it's 2 a.m.  
1998  
20 years too late  
i'm howling outside cemetery gates  
crying for dead men i've seen cry  
cowboy poets whose words ran dry  
and i want a way in  
or a way out  
back to the parking meter

**"humping on the parking meter, leaning on the parking meter, oh she  
looked so good. oh, she looked so fine"**

finally  
hitching my horse to the parking meter  
watching patti smith watching van morrison watching

**"g-l-o-r-i-a"**

**"in excelsis deo"**

then  
I could balance forever in the saddle  
at the gate  
on the edge  
of possibility

because i know where the goddamn cowboys have gone  
but  
where the fuck did my horses go?

*S.M. Hogg*

## ⌘ Barbiturates

Stop and read. Don't cross! Beware! What's in the  
papers today? An ad in red color: "TAKE A PILL TO SLEEP.  
TAKE A PILL."

I won't read; I won't beware of my own self; I'll sleep  
without a pill!

*and a red light comes on*

A child says aloud "GIVE ME A PILL."

An old man, a respectable old man

says "GIVE ME A PILL."

A girl, too, "PILL! PILL!"

My mother wishes that she could read.

Mother we won't read. We won't read. We won't!

And we'll sleep without any pills.

Stop. What's in the papers today? Nixon gave a speech  
to the Congress about the Good—the Well-intentioned  
of the world—and Peace.

Cadavers of children in Viet Nam sleep in peace. Red tape,  
bureaucrats, like the red light blink red. And the  
entire spectrum asks for pills to sleep.

What? The Pope talked too? About the Holy  
intentions of the Church  
And the Good of the World and Evils  
of birth control and Peace?

Steps of the Holy House in Jerusalem, you may  
sleep peacefully, as the whole world desires, it seems,  
sleep  
above peace.

Stop again!  
What?  
In today's news?  
Nixon gave a speech and the Pope talked, too?

And a bank went bankrupt?  
And dances were held in execution squares?  
It seems all the world was in the press today  
talking peace  
and good.

I say SLEEPING PILLS FOR THE DEAD!

Pills for the dead in Viet Nam,  
in Jerusalem  
too.  
Pills

A child cries out "GIVE ME..."  
An old man whimpers, low, "GIVE ME..."  
Young girl murmurs out of her dream, "GIVE ME . . ."

My mother, sleep in peace  
for the world is concerned.  
Give me a pill to sleep; give my son one.

And the huckster's voice  
rolls out of the black  
and the whole street trembles  
"WONDERFUL!"

*Belind al Hydari*

*Translated by Ron Bayes and Nabil Nassib Ghandour, Jr.*

⌘ If You Sleep with Me Once, My Sir

Come back once again,  
My Sir—  
come back white like our shame  
like the morning lie in saluting  
our neighbor.

My Sir,  
come back, like us—like ourselves.  
We want to worship You as our shadow,  
our pride, our shame;  
My Sir  
we won't light the candles until You return;  
we won't wash the road with tears until You return;  
we won't love any God: sick with hunger we wait  
until You return.

Come back like our desire,  
like every laughing lie,  
like the morning lie in saluting our neighbor  
because we want to know again Your dearness,  
because we want to worship You as both God and the Devil.

My Sir,  
if You sleep with me once—  
run Your fast burning blood in my bed—  
if You know my crippled God  
and how I sing happiness  
and how I become  
a resident of my ribs  
and how, how I become, My Sir,  
with any sharp incision,  
with my crucified night across my bed,

bigger than Your cross which is  
tossed behind the suns  
behind the wind, My Sir—

if You knew  
if You knew  
My Sir.

Bigger than You are my  
crippled God  
came back like my ugly face,  
my ugly body—  
came like we are.  
That is why we cry louder for You,  
because we want to know in Your eyes  
the love of man  
for we love You in our shame,  
worship You in our shadow,  
because we want to become in You whole—  
God and Devil—My Sir.

O My Sir  
please  
be a man for once.

*Belind al Hydari*

*Translated by Ron Bayes and Nabil Nassib Ghandour, Jr.*

## ☞ Invitation

Silence the bells.  
Close people's eyes.  
This is the City of Sleep.  
No tomorrow.  
No yesterday.  
You, night journeyer,  
bury your worries—  
the problems you carry  
—and sleep.

You, outcast, full of regret,  
strip the skin off your meat and  
leave it for your pursuers —  
leave it for them  
a meal in the forest  
—and sleep.  
This is the City of Sleep.  
No tomorrow.  
No yesterday.

Do you desire to see  
spattered blood?  
Abel's face?  
Or maidenheads taken  
by force—  
or by seduction?  
The big world  
is behind the door.  
Sleep.

No watch stared at him.  
No numbers tangled his direction.  
And the days slept.  
And the nights slept.  
And the thieves and the guards slept.

Yes, it's for you!  
Sleep.  
Oh sleep!  
As for me,  
I shall close people's eyes  
and I shall close my eyes  
and sleep.  
Silence the bells.  
Silence.

*Belind al Hydari*

*Translated by Ron Bayes and Nabil Nassib Ghandour, Jr.*



## ☯ Deserving of Neither

It was deep into mid-Rove, early in the Sowing of the eleventh year of the Glorious New Order, that Elmo Feinwelder's memory began to return to him. It didn't happen very dramatically. It wasn't caused by any cataclysmic stumble. No teeth were sacrificed to the psychic shoulder charge that kick-started the gradual removal of the tartar coating his brain. There was no accompanying celestial orchestration. No Rupert Murdoch Royal American News Service sensor picked up even a slight blip in Elmo's neighborhood sensing curve. There wasn't even a sweet roll involved. Elmo just opened his eyes one morning, and slowly began to remember.

At first, Elmo doubted his own senses. Memories, he knew, especially those memories upon which one might pause and reflect wistfully, were counterproductive. They got in the way of the constant press into the future. Too many people dawdling, thinking of picnics and multicultural fairs, weakened the wedge that all good citizens formed to move forward to the light and subjugate the agents of evil. Elmo had sublimated his individual reveries and wishes for so long—he had succeeded in eliminating from public and private view everything but God-fearing commitment—he had damped down so successfully the last embers of any emotional or moral sedition—that he hardly recognized what was happening.

He remained very silent for a long time and imperceptibly shivered at the delicious joy of a teasing trickle of the unmonitored pre-Grace memories that dripped down the walls of his cranium. He made sure not to smile, frown, or look studious until nightfall. Then, he knew, he could safely slide his face under the covers. Although the O'Reilly was turned off, and he didn't even plug in the Limbaugh until the Astros-Crusaders Bushball game came on at 8:00, Elmo was aware that everything was public. So until the memory seepage stopped, he resolved to be very careful and very circumspect.

And he began to remember more.

In the days when evil last stood toe-to-toe with the Leader of the World, Elmo was a teacher of music and visual art at Tom Ridge Patriotism Academy. It was known as Mark Twain Middle School in those days. As the first of the Cleansing

Wars raged on in the Oil Kingdoms, Elmo began to notice small changes in his neighborhood.

Although he never pretended to understand the nuances of foreign or domestic policy, he began to remember being mildly shocked when what was then called "The Administration" reversed two generations of their national platform and announced support for increased funding for public education. Better facilities were the first order. Then a revised curriculum. Then a strong teacher training program. Then a never-ending wave of educated, motivated young Americans to lead the way through this new millennium.

Building and expanding new school facilities was easier than Elmo could have thought. There was no shortage of workers, and plenty of managerial positions opened for those who could carry firearms. Private property restrictions that had long hampered securing desirable property for public education melted away with the formation of the Ashcroft Coalition, a full-time co-equal partnership of large and small business groups, civic and religious aid organizations, and state and local government arts and education agencies—all funded and supported by the national government.

Although Elmo was certain that arts education would be cut back, as it had been with each new education philosophy that came along during his teaching career, he was pleasantly surprised when his budget actually grew, from a few dollars to what was now more than 8,000 Reagans a year. He was pleased with his pay raise, his personal parking space, his state-of-the-art computerized teaching aids, and his brand new History of Religious Arts textbooks. After dipping in a toe very tentatively, Elmo soon leaped into the flow of the New Education. In the first year of the national competition, three of Elmo's students ranked among the top 10 in Perry City's first Patriotic Poster Challenge.

As a matter of fact, except for the increased funding and supplies and the occasional change of a name or two, Elmo couldn't see much different in the Bonilla Independent School District. There were the new on-campus social organizations, of course. About half of them dealt with politics, and the other half with religion.

Each school in the district had chapters of these clubs. The meetings were raucous, and members diverted a lot of class time with fundraising and proselytizing, but the officers were very polite, punctual, and very neatly groomed.

Elmo was under the covers now, hiding his face from the shadows on the wall. He began to remember the next few years of the Glorious New Order. He remembered how the deacons in his neighborhood church had become so aggressive during services. He remembered how collection plates were gradually replaced with automatic tithe-deductions from his account at the Santorum Credit Union. He remembered how younger members of the congregation began to favor uniforms, and growled, and mumbled, and even shouted hosannas throughout the service. This and the compulsory boisterous singing of "God Bless America," "A Mighty Fortress," and "Onward Christian Soldiers" at each service began to trouble him. Although he had been fairly devout from his childhood, Elmo gradually began missing services. He slept in on the occasional Sunday and, finally, began attending only on Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Fourth of July services. Each holiday visit caused him more disquiet than peace though. It was two years ago, as he approached the church for the Easter service and saw the marquee announcing the Worldwide Television Broadcast of the White House Easter service entitled: "Jesus Died for Your Sins, You Assholes!" that Elmo turned and quietly walked away from the church forever.

It was about then that Elmo began to fill the hours previously devoted to silent reflection and reading, with watching the O'Reilly. It was an old Sony Trinitron, but it got all the local channels and the Astros and Spurs games, and of course the Public Information Channel. He remembered how for months he sat riveted to the set, watching the New Babylon Purification Hearings. It was exciting watching all the lovely faces he'd paid his hard-earned Cheneys to watch on the silver screen solemnly pledging their allegiance to God and the Nation and the Party. He watched this glamour parade over his tuna casserole for several months and then, one night, a lovely actress whose name he hadn't yet been able to remember, mentioned something about the Bill of Rights.

The room was stunned into silence, until Inquisitor Gingrich trumpeted. "Generations of brave men and women have died to guarantee you those rights! They are dying right now in the Great Cleansing Wars to keep you free to enjoy those rights! Do you want them to have died in vain? How dare you exercise them?" And then the room erupted into cheers, and the young woman tearfully apologized and was magnanimously forgiven.

Once the entertainment industry was free of the influence of drunkards, drug-fiends, perverts, and proponents of gutter religions, New Babylon went back to work with new vigor, exporting the ideals of the Glorious New Order, honoring the sacrifices of the Great Cleansing Wars, producing more movies and television programs so that even Murdoch Central had to sub-license a network or two.

Elmo's memories became more recent now. He remembered how gradually everyone in his neighborhood seemed to look a lot like him in hair and skin color. He began to hear fewer foreign accents in the market, and see only American-language titles on bookshelves. Elmo began to notice how much neater his neighborhood had become, how quiet and clean the streets were, how his students' Patriotic Poster Challenge exhibits remained free of graffiti. Of course, he missed his chalupas, and his couscous, and especially his French roast coffee, but there was always a new Great Cleansing War on all Murdoch O'Reilly channels each February, May, and November. He watched them all religiously, supporting the troops as he learned to like his Chicken-fried steak, his Dr. Pepper, and the tough new editorials in the *Perry City Daily Hearst*.

Elmo's memories were more recent now. And as they came flooding forward, they welled against the seawall of the present day, roiled, and backwashed rapidly towards the very beginning of his life. Then he was a child. Then the memories moved forward again.

He remembered his father hauled away drunk to an asylum. He remembered his tricycle being sold for groceries. He remembered a beating from a barrio gang when he was just a boy. He remembered being teased and taunted during high school. He remembered being drafted and going to Vietnam. He remembered

struggling to understand the demons that tortured Camus and Huxley and Wilde and Tennessee Williams. He remembered unemployment, near starvation, his failure as an artist, his fifteen years of poverty paying off student loans, his underpaid disrespected teaching tenure. He remembered his solitary evenings with only Mendelssohn and Saul Bellow and Richard Wright for company. He remembered how he'd triple-locked his doors and burglar-barred his windows in fear of the other-ness of his neighbors. He remembered all the uncertainty, the insecurity, the constant confusion at what was happening around him and what his place was in the world. He remembered all that frightened him before evil had been exposed as real and targeted for removal from the world. He remembered now how things were for him before life became safer and more orderly and more centered.

And, when Elmo was finished remembering everything he could possibly remember, he arose, shaved, showered, and dressed, and enjoyed a hearty bowl of crystal drain cleaner for breakfast.

*DP Hymel*

## ☯ Do the Dead Know What Time It Is?

*for Kenneth Patchen*

[SETTING: a nicely appointed urban bar; at rise there is one customer—a slightly older man—HOWARD—and the bartender—STEPH. After a second or two another young woman—RITA—enters; she's a bit younger than STEPH]

RITA—[to STEPH] Hey, lady! Anything happening tonight?

STEPH—[doesn't stop working, but still looks up to smile] Not so's you'd notice.

RITA—[hanging her coat on a hook] Small crowd for a working day, isn't it?  
[moves towards bar]

STEPH—Yeah, it *is* quiet. Oh well, maybe it's "National Be Good to Your Liver Day" and we just didn't get the word.

RITA—Anything up with the guy at the end of the bar? [gestures]

STEPH—Nope. Just made his order, was very polite, is minding his business.

RITA—That's a nice change. No moves on Ms. Mixology of the month?

STEPH—No, no moves. [working on bar stuff throughout this exchange; she is a very diligent worker!]

RITA—[a pause while she considers] Think he's gay?

STEPH—[stops] No, I don't think so. Think he's just keeping to himself. Some people actually do that, you know. [moves in front of RITA]

RITA—I get the message, Ms. Subtle.

STEPH—And you are having . . .

RITA-- . . . Margarita, rocks, salt.

STEPH—I can do that.

RITA—Bring it to me over here. [RITA moves to a stool one over from the man they've been talking about; he's not communicating any antisocial behavior—just doesn't seem to be in tune; he looks up; they smile, he looks back down; STEPH brings the drink] Thanks, babe.

STEPH—Anytime. [she moves away, busing and other stuff very efficiently throughout]

RITA—[sits with her drink for a moment] Ol' Steph knows what to do with cheap tequila.

HOWARD—[looking up a little startled] Huh?

RITA—Steph, you know: legs for decades, too much makeup, cowboys cry for her, works her cute little tail off. [HOWARD doesn't react] The lady behind the bar.

HOWARD—Oh, yeah. [a beat or two] What about her?

RITA—I said she makes a good Margarita.

HOWARD—Yeah, I guess; [a beat] I don't drink them.

RITA—I know; I see the beer. [a pause] It's a shame. [another pause as HOWARD doesn't respond] It's fun to watch a real artist behind the bar. [no response; sigh;

*mostly to herself*] Yep. Ol' Steph. She knows what she's doing.

HOWARD—Yeah, I guess.

RITA—[*moves a little closer*] If I were to ask you "is all you can say is 'yeah, I guess'," would you say answer "yeah, I guess?"

HOWARD—Yeah, I guess. [*they both laugh*] Just finishing work?

RITA—Yep, another eight plus hours a 'bumpin' my head on that ol' glass ceiling. How about you?

HOWARD—Yeah, I got off a little while ago.

RITA—I haven't seen you in here before—not that I come in here *every* day. Is this your hangout?

HOWARD—Well, I *do* work around here, but I guess that I don't have a "hangout."

RITA—You guess?

HOWARD—Yes. [*a pause*]

RITA—So where do you work? [*she's working much too hard at this*]

HOWARD—Warner Building. [*a quick sip and back into silence*]

RITA—[*after a pause; to herself*] "And where do you work, beautiful young heart-breaker?" "Actually, I don't work, sir; I'm a poor little match girl, being kept in luxury by a rich young liberal who suffers so from guilt, but who possesses an



enormous . . ." *[interrupts herself; louder]* Steph? Any possibility of some peanuts? *[a beat]* Trail mix? Kibbles n' Bits? *[STEPH delivers; after a pause, RITA tries one more time to begin a conversation]* Did you ever notice how bartenders these days wait for you to ask them to bring the snacks. I'm beginning to wonder if they've been told that they can take home what the customers don't eat. If this keeps up, you'll need a court order to get anything with your drink. *[a beat]* Or am I just exaggerating? And *don't* say "I guess."

HOWARD—I'm sorry; I don't mean to be rude. I guess I'm just not all that with it today.

RITA—That's okay. I'm not really that forward. It's just that I'm so relieved to be off work and I was hoping to have some conversation with my Margarita . . . not with the Margarita, actually, just at the same time. *[she chuckles; he doesn't seem to know that he should do likewise]*

HOWARD—So I guess that this would be your hangout?

RITA—Yes, if I had one, this would be it. It's nice here. Things are sort of laid back. It's not filled with ferns and people in sweats drinking carrot juice. It's not filled with briefcases and lawyers. It doesn't have walls full of televisions and waiters in referee uniforms. And, *most* important for me, it doesn't have that meat-market aroma that passes for atmosphere in a single's bar.

HOWARD—I guess you're right. I'm afraid I don't see you "hanging out" in a single's bar. You don't appear to be the type. Not that I'd have a lot of experience in those places either.

RITA—You'd be surprised where a young woman will find herself when she's looking for tequila and intelligent conversation.

HOWARD—[*a pause*] Well, all the same, you don't seem the type. You seem a very nice young woman.

RITA—Thank you—I think. I'm afraid that'll be on my gravestone someday: "Lovely Rita—meter maid—nice young woman—spinster of this parish."

HOWARD—I'm Howard, by the way.

RITA—As in "Our father, who art in Heaven, Howard be thy name?" [*she chuckles; he doesn't*]

HOWARD—[*stunned*] Oh!

RITA—I've offended you. I'm sorry.

HOWARD—No, you were just making a joke; there was no way you could have known.

RITA—[*she has finished her drink*] Known what? [*not waiting for an answer*] Steph!

STEPH—[*from the other end of the bar*] Yes, mistress.

RITA—[*waves empty glass*] King me, wench!

STEPH—I hear; I obey. [*to HOWARD*] Ready for another?

HOWARD—Sure I guess so, thanks. [*STEPH leaves to fill their drink order; a*

good-looking young man—GUY—enters and sits next to RITA on the other side of HOWARD during the next exchange] Known about my dream last night.

RITA—What? I'm sorry, I think I missed something back there.

HOWARD—You apologized for offending me; I said you were just making a joke and that you couldn't have known; you said "known what"; and I said "known about my dream last night."

RITA—Your dream? *[turns to the new arrival]* Did we just step back into the 70s? *[He chuckles, calls to STEPH and places a drink order; we don't hear their exchange; from this point on, as HOWARD gets deeper and deeper into his story, he is actually speaking to RITA less and less. As a result, RITA gradually begins listening less and less and pays more attention to GUY]*

HOWARD—Yes, I had a dream last night that moved me quite a bit and I'd been sitting here trying to make some sense out of it.

RITA—Well, tell me about it. *[she smiles at HOWARD and grimaces at GUY]*

HOWARD—I dreamed that I saw my mother going to Heaven last night.

RITA—*[insincerely]* Wow! *[aside to GUY]* Just my luck; an airport solicitor on his day off. And he seemed like such a nice guy. *[she chuckles as STEPH arrives with GUY's drink; to HOWARD]* So can you tell me about it? *[interrupting herself]* Steph! *[stopping her before she can go]* I'm going to need another of these, like real soon.

GUY—I'll get that. *[a smile for STEPH and RITA who also exchange one; HOWARD goes on, oblivious]*

HOWARD—My mother has been sick for a while, you see, for quite a while. In

fact, I can't remember a time when she wasn't coughing, suffering from muscle aches, a cold, or something. She's been prone to congestive heart failure for years and she still smokes. Now she's down to about 85 pounds. My, she is so frail.

RITA—Uh huh. [STEPH arrives with her drink]

GUY—[quietly; HOWARD is apparently going on about his mother's condition during this exchange] I like the way you smile.

RITA—You are observant and have good taste, sir.

GUY—So, do you have something on for tonight? [indicating HOWARD] I mean are you and this guy . . .

HOWARD— . . . Anyway, we all know that she's not going to be with us much longer. All we can do is try to be supportive. You know?

RITA—[nodding to HOWARD] Yes, I do [aside to GUY] No, I just met him. Are you waiting for . . .

HOWARD— . . . [more animated] see, she's not really been very happy since my father died. Her youngest grandchild is a teenager now and she told me once she feels sort of . . . sort of unemployed as a wife, mother, and a grandmother. I don't have any kids for her, you see; I don't even have a wife. [reflective pause]

GUY— . . . no, as far as I know, nobody's coming here to meet me, unless you . . .

HOWARD— . . . and this might sound strange; it might sound out of place—talking about God at [looks at his watch] 5:56 PM in a midtown bar—but I know that my dream was the truth.

RITA—*[by this time, she's not listening to HOWARD; all her attentions are on GUY]* . . . Well, maybe you're right; maybe I did come here tonight just to meet you. *[they laugh]* So, do you want to hang around or . . .

HOWARD— . . . in my dream, my mother is lying on her bed under a soft, white blanket. She looks calm and peaceful, and her breathing is quiet and easy. My brothers and sister and I are all sitting around the room not saying anything; I don't think we're praying. And then, suddenly, we all realize that we can't hear her breathing anymore, that she's dead. And then, while we're all looking at each other, I see something start to rise out of her body. It looked something like a cloud or an outline, and I know right away that it must be her soul. *[very animated]* No one else in the room can see it but me, but I know that it is happening.

GUY— . . . We can go over to my place; I've got champagne; I've got a projection TV. We can kick off our shoes and watch something sexy.

RITA—Well, I guess so; I just don't want you to think that I'm . . . *[silently motions to STEPH that they want to leave]*

HOWARD— . . . by now she's hovering—drifting like cigarette smoke above a card table—until she reaches the ceiling. Then, she passes right through and, even though I'm still sitting with my brothers and sister, I can see her just like I'm also floating along beside her in the sky. *[RITA and GUY are making ready to leave, but HOWARD doesn't notice. He moves DSC talking to the air; STEPH begins to listen raptly]* And then she stops floating and is a little more like herself. She's wearing this smoky-white satin gown and I notice that she's breathing quietly and easy, like she was in her room. She's all alone, standing in the dark, and she starts to shiver. I want to comfort her, but I can't. It's like I'm watching her like she's on television or something . . .

RITA—[to GUY] If we hurry, we can beat the rain *and* the traffic.

GUY—You're going to be happy you came with me.

RITA—I think I'm *already* happy.

HOWARD— . . . and then she looks up at something that I can't see. She begins to shake as if she sees something huge and horrifying; she is very afraid. She starts to cry, cry really hard. She's crying in big convulsions, and by now she's shaking like a leaf. And then this loud, but very soft voice says: "You can stop crying now."

GUY—Ready?

RITA—[with an over the shoulder wave to STEPH] *You don't know the half of it! [they begin to exit]*

HOWARD—And, somehow, she looks as if she *knows* who's talking to her, and she reacts to the voice just as if it were a comforting touch. She looks at her shoulders as if an arm were around them, and her shivering stops; and then the voice says to her again: "You can stop crying now."

GUY—[from off] Who was that weird old dude, anyhow? [we hear RITA giggle]

HOWARD—[in wonder] That's all the voice said. And she did stop crying. She started walking away from me. I should have felt sad, but I knew that she was happy for the first time in years. My brothers and sister and I just looked at each other for a while and then we left the room. I don't know if I was able to tell

them what I saw, but it seemed as if we were all relieved.

*[HOWARD falls silent; after a beat, STEPH stops looking and begins polishing the bar; the audience hears a very loud clock strike six; lights slowly begin to fade just ahead of a slower-fading spot on HOWARD DSC; after the last chime, as the lights begin to fade, HOWARD turns to look at STEPH, where RITA was, and at the door. Before the stage is completely black, HOWARD speaks softly]*

HOWARD—You can stop crying now.

*[the rest of the way to black]*

*D.P. Hymel*

## ✿ INISHBEAG

### Prologue

He howled for milk; he howled for his mother. He howled because his feet were swaddled so that he could not kick or put them in his mouth. He howled because the moon shone too brightly on his cradle. He howled because he simply enjoyed the sound of his voice, too long silent in the murky womb.

And because he howled, they called him Cu.

Our lives are but a cry in the Void. . . .

As he grew, he learned to listen, and found more magic there than in his howling: he listened to the birds and learned their secrets; learned there was so much more to them than feathers. He conversed with the bees and learned their songs, their dances. He listened to the rain and understood its sorrow. He listened to the hills and learned who lived beneath.

And because he listened, his parents feared for their child. . . .

A cry in the Void. . . .

And then she came, and he sat at her knee, and he learned. She was beautiful and mysterious with her long white hair and ice-laden eyes. And she sang to him sweet songs and sad, angry songs and songs full of joy. And in time, he began to sing with her, his voice a high, keening wail that was ethereal and unnatural. It was an Otherworldly sound, trembling in the air, that haunted and enchanted all who had ears with which to hear.

Aching and endless were the songs he sang, of love lost and gained; of life cut into the quick by faith, by hope, by longing. From his larynx, dreams flowed forth, weaving themselves into visions that hung in the air—apparitions of sound. And always, the Lady was there, and he at her feet, singing to the stars as she stroked his hair.



And because he sang, he became her boy.

A cry in the Void . . . .

High on the air of night, her voice came through his window. It wrapped itself in midnight and crept into his bed; touched cold fingers to his temples and soothed his fevered head:

"Hush now, child,  
Do not cry—  
Let death come without mourning,  
Wrap yourself in the night;  
Take comfort there.

Hush now, child,  
Don't you cry—  
Walls come down that we might see,  
Wrap yourself in the night;  
Take comfort there."

Burning tears ran down his face as he burrowed himself in her words as if they were blankets drenched in ice. And he keened into the night, just sound, no words.

And as he keened, his mother's soul followed the sound into the Dark. . . .

Our lives are but a cry in the Void. . . .  
Our lives are but a cry in the Void. . . .

Truth was, Cu has spent half his adult life waiting in airports under the cover of the darkness of outlandish black sunglasses, praying no one would notice him;

praying that, for just one moment, he could return to being plain-old, normal, extremely Irish Peter O'Day. And here he was in another of those truthful moments, flipping absently through some unidentified French fashion magazine, and attempting to fuse himself with its nondescript pages. Nearby, a family was saying a tearful farewell. He tried very hard to ignore them. The mother, a dark little woman draped in lace (from Basque, or missing a damned good chance, he noted), was wringing her hands and practically wailing as if it were wartime. Peter shifted uncomfortably in his chair. Like every other airport chair in the world, it was shaped entirely wrong for his bottom.

"Don't give it away," Dorian had said, his head bent reverently over his guitar.

Peter had simply run one small hand thoughtfully through his ebony hair and walked out of the studio.

Peter needed a vacation. He needed time away from the spotlight, from the band, from the music, and most of all, from being Cu. Success always had its price. One didn't need to read much Shakespeare to discover the cost of ambition. And in his case, passion had been the exact amount, paid in full. If only the check had bounced. . . .

Misty-eyed, the family was parted by the last call to the gate. The mother still heaved and hiccupped under the father's arm. Skeletal maidens paraded Prada and Gucci to Cu's inattentive eye.

"Don't give it away. . . ."

But he felt as though he'd sold his soul to the lowest bidder long ago. Twenty years at any other career in the world (well, almost any other career . . . ) garnered respect. A practicing lawyer or physician, even a poet or painter or dancer or opera singer or actor: twenty years equaled success. But for a man in Peter's position, the position of popstar, twenty years could easily come to equate with "adult contemporary artist"—the kiss of death, as far as he was concerned, right up there with fat, aging Elvis on a stage in Vegas—or, worse, "laughing stock."

He'd seen it happen to far too many of his contemporaries. Where were all the others with whom he'd shared the stage seventeen years ago, in his prime? The

wise ones had turned to producing, deejaying in exclusive clubs, and writing film scores. The less lucky forged onward with recording, but found an audience among the bored, middle-aged suburbanites who had long-forgotten the passions of their youth.

Sure, his lyrics were still relevant. Sure, the dyed-in-the-wool fans still came to their shows filled with unshadowed devotion; they bought the albums, guaranteed platinum sales, and cheered when the band scored their latest Grammy. But that didn't change the hard, cold facts, the facts that kept him awake at night and made him cry inside: if you wanted to hear the band on the radio anymore, it was best to choose a classic rock or all-'80s station; if you turned to MTV, best to brace for boy bands, bimbos, and rappers, because you wouldn't see Cu's face there anywhere, not anymore.

What was the point of all he'd given; all he'd spent? What was the price?

"Don't give it away. . . ."

But he already had, hadn't he, long ago? He gave it on the stage a thousand nights, his passion flowing out of him with the sweat on his brow. He gave it to the charities, the causes: endless nights spent in heated research, so he would know what he championed, only to be belittled after for stepping "outside his place." He gave it to the woman he'd loved his whole life, until she couldn't take it anymore, and had left him to move to France. He had drowned her with his love, his passion, his constant spark that burned like a double-wicked Roman Candle.

He gave it to the band, pouring himself into every piece of music as if his very life depended upon the art of expression, which, in a way, it did. For what? To be constantly reminded that he wasn't the center of all, as if he had ever thought he was?

He gave and gave, until he had become a household name, drenched in gossip. He gave until it seemed no part of his life was secret or sacred anymore. They knew the face, knew the name, knew the soul inside, knew the past, knew the present; knew his tragedies, his triumphs, and his shame. They had been there, bought the tee-shirt, and they didn't give a damn anymore.

"Don't give it away. . . ." Dorian had said.

But he already had.

Peter felt an almost baptismal wave sweep across his soul as he boarded the plane back to Ireland. As he settled into his seat in first class, he escaped from behind his Oakley prison and watched the shadows hungrily engulf the fading crucible of Charles de Gaulle.

## Chapter One

Mist was a constant companion during the long drive through County Galway towards the jagged Connemara coastline. Occasionally, a person would emerge, ghostlike atop the gyring wheels of an insectile bicycle. They were absurd faerie creatures who waved assuringly as they hurtled past, their faces frozen in masks of absentminded mirth. Peter faded into the soft leather of his rental car, barely aware even of driving. Every now and again a bump in the road would jolt him back into the conscious world of brake pedals and steering wheels.

In the car was silence, like a warm shawl wrapped about his shoulders, comforting him, isolating him. Swimming through the evergreen Irish mists, the only sounds that of the car's labored breathing and his own, Peter began to feel, if not a tiny bit more hopeful, a tiny bit less desperate and exhausted, at least a little more sane. A little relaxed. In short, he felt himself breathe again. It wasn't a great improvement, but it was something.

His one fleeting moment of uneasiness came when he parked the car up on the tiny ferry—which was really no more than a glorified raft with a motor—for the crossing to the aisle of Inishbeag, a neighbor of the better-known Inishbofin. The car gave a lurch like an angry pony, as if to say: "I was not designed for aquatic travel! I am a car, not a boat!" And then it nearly plunged over the side into the drink. The ferryman's insidious laughter didn't help. Cursing and banging the steering wheel, he relinquished the keys from the ignition and got out to have a walk around. It was a very short walk. In fact, it was hardly a walk at all—more

like a slower, more boring sort of pacing.

The one and only positive thing he could find about the ferry ride was the spectacular mist-shrouded view of the ruined cliff-forts of Dun Mor and Dun Grainne as they passed Inishbofin. There was a strange surging, soaring feeling inside of him as he was reminded of being part of something more, something older, something that mattered.

He was not the first man with a questing heart to pass this way. Mist glared sun back at him, and he caught his breath and closed his eyes as a flood of memory poured over him: a similar ferry, perhaps even the same, and he at his mother's side, listening as she murmured to him, pointing to the soft eclipses that were the shadows of the twin forts.

"There was Maelduin's destination, when he set out long ago. 'Twas from there a mad, violent wind set him adrift on his *immrama*—his journey to the Otherworld. And was to that very same shore he finally moored when he found his way home again."

Maelduin had set forth on a voyage of vengeance, but instead found enlightenment. Peter's quest was for peace, but so far, he was finding only memory.

A crisp wind whipped his long black hair, and for a moment, he wondered whether he too might be swept away. Maelduin had encountered strange, ferocious beasts on his journey; pillars of fire and magickal fruits; hermits and hold men. What monsters might he encounter within himself, on the long-forgotten Isle of Who He Really Was?

Islands were myth, magick, and mystery to the Ancient Irish. They were the places where the veils were rent in two, and nothing was as it really seemed. They were places in a shifting, tumultuous sea that held the secrets to the meaning of everything.

Perhaps that was the real reason he had come here. Perhaps he was hoping there would be something of that folk memory here for him; some part of that history. This was his own *immrama*.

Just as Maelduin had discovered himself on the islands beyond Inishbofin, per-

haps he might as well. Yes, that's why he had come here. That's what made this place special; made it matter—history; a collective unconscious of folk memory that imbued a place with soul.

Because Inishbeag had a soul.

Inishbeag, like Inishbofin, had been a Celtic stronghold until around the 5th century. Then, the monks had come and built their great silent houses of stone and spirit. The ninth century had seen the murders of many of these same monks, as the Vikings overtook the Connemara coast. Inishbeag, in fact, had a much bloodier past than did Inishbofin. With the arrival of the longboats, the monks had shut themselves in their cells, determined to hold off the Norse marauders. Instead, they had found themselves sitting ducks.

Like the dying cries of those monks, a gang of seagulls screeched overhead, drawing his eyes skyward, and halting his thoughts for a moment. They dove and whirled at each other, and at the water beneath. A soft smile played across his face as he wished for breadcrumbs.

"And will we see them," he had asked her, as they watched the ancestors of these present gulls dine on the bread which they had thrown.

"Perhaps, *mo gra*," she had answered, pulling him up close under her arm and sheltering him from the wind. "But they are nothing to fear. They're not the darkest denizens of Inishbeag. There is something else. . . ."

But she had never said what.

He remembered the faraway look in her eyes then, and, for a moment, smiled at how his now must surely echo it.

Laughing slightly to himself, Peter said aloud, much to his own surprise: "Well, Gus, this should at least be entertaining. . . ."

Somewhere in the dampness, huddled against the brine-slued railing, Gus nodded and purred.

"What could be more relaxing than a month or so's holiday in a haunted keep, eh?" He pushed his sunglasses (which at this point were entirely more habit than necessity) up on his nose and ran his hands through his hair.

There was a soft, breezy feeling on his left shoulder which he hadn't felt since he was a small child, and he realized with a soft, leprechaun-like grin that Gus was having a ride.

"You're right. Best head back to sweet-talk the car," he said, still smiling, a hand going absently to his shoulder. His mind registered fur, his fingers only air.

"Heading back" consisted of taking about six or so strides in the general direction of the small green Jag. His hand upon the door handle, he surveyed the horizon one last time. Emerging from the fog like a chalky corpse, the shore of Inishbeag was a negative shadow.

The ferryman's hand on his shoulder spun him about like a top. Gus wasn't terribly enthused, either.

"Don't do that!" He spat into the dampness.

"Jumpy, eh?" The fat little man asked in abject glee. "I'd be jumpy myself, were I staying out there." He gestured in the general direction of the keep. "Especially alone," he added for good measure. It was quite clear that he was enjoying this. Thoroughly.

"Oh, I'm not alone," he said, cracking an irrepressibly wicked smile. "There's Gus," he gestured to his apparently empty shoulder in a manner as if to say: "Hadh't you noticed?"

The man regarded him for a moment or two, eyes steely as the ocean around them, then walked away, shaking his head.

"Cracked," he muttered, returning to the matchbox that was his feeble control room. "Cracked, I tell ye. . . ."

Peter laughed softly, climbed into the car, and prepared for the adventure of getting the rather temperamental Jag off of the ferry. Gus rode shotgun.

## Chapter Two

The keep was so large, and the island so small, that it seemed a mass of stone and mortar afloat. Thanks to this, the locals had come to call the entire place—

keep and all—simply Inishbeag. Gotta love the simplicity of the Irish, a people who believe in calling a duck, a duck. Of course, it had once had other names—must have—but they had been forgotten after the Vikings, and the Saxons, and the harsher days of Ireland. And that was just as well. Being called the Holy Keep of Saint Fionan on Inishbeag or at Connemara or something of that sort wouldn't have made the place any more charming. In fact, it would have somehow wrecked the entire mystique.

The two absurdly tiny old folks who met him outside to aid him with carrying his luggage—which seemed almost larger than they were—seemed like wraiths themselves. They introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. O'Reilly, the caretakers (as they noted with extreme pride) since 1958. After a jovial, if slightly befuddled, exchange of *hailtes* hey led him upstairs to his room, then proceeded to show him around.

The tour began back downstairs, just beyond the grand foyer through which he had entered, where the downstairs cloisters had been converted to a warmly lit reception hall, regaled everywhere with what hoped to be symbols of Celtic bravery, but actually came across as "early-modern-dead-animal."

For some reason which he could not explain to himself and didn't dare intimate to the O'Reilly's, the once-regal room felt nothing but shabby and sad.

"Yeats' crowd stayed here once," Mr. O'Reilly announced, stoking the flames in the fireplace which graced one end of the room. The monstrous maw of it was large enough to barbecue a small Sumo wrestler.

"Yes," confirmed Mrs. O'Reilly. "Story goes that someone in that lot—I believe it was Maude Gonne—is responsible for the crack in the plaster there."

She pointed to a place where one stone hung almost loose in its mortar.

"Things must've gotten a bit rowdy," she continued, offering him an attempt at a playful nudge. As Mr. O'Reilly fiddled with the fire, she droned on: "I've been after the mister for years to patch it, but he says it's one of the charms of this place."

Peter nodded and half-smiled. It wasn't that he was disinterested, really. He



was just very, very tired.

Mr. O'Reilly stopped worrying with the fire and led them onward to the next room.

"Used to be a reading room, back in the day," he explained. "We tried to make a go of things here with a B and B back in '82, and thought the guests might enjoy it more this way."

The reading room had been converted into a cozy game room, complete with a billiard table and a dartboard.

"It's rather small," Mrs. O'Reilly fretted. Peter chuckled softly to himself, making a mental note that apparently small does not mean the same thing in a keep as it does in other buildings, except perhaps in the context of "less large."

Mr. O'Reilly gave a curt nod as if to say: well, that's enough of that. Then he reached for Mrs. O'Reilly's hand. She took his, then offered a demure smile to Peter.

"Chapel's next. Missus doesn't like it much," Mr. O'Reilly explained, then led onward. "It's just through here. . . ."

As Mr. O'Reilly opened the huge oak doors, Peter stifled a chill trying to run down his spine. He felt as though something had just walked across his grave, in some hidden future dimension. And the most troublesome bit of all was that he had no idea why he felt it. Apparently, however, Mrs. O'Reilly felt likewise.

"This is the soul of the place," Mr. O'Reilly said as he stepped inside the shadowed room.

"Aye, it is indeed," Mrs. O'Reilly echoed. "The center."

One might never have guessed the true history of this place from the foyer, or the two previous rooms, or his bedroom above, but here it was everywhere. The ceiling was amazingly high, and the walls, though bereft of the stained glass windows Peter had come to expect in such a place, were absolutely plastered with tapestries. It was these that told the tale. If the room itself was the soul of Inishbeag, these were its voice.

Here was Maelduin, his boat overloaded with stowaways and tagalongs, setting

out on his journey. Inishbofin loomed behind; Inishbeag before him, its shores swept violently by the wind that would be the key to his becoming. Above, in the sky, the ancestors of the ancestors of the gulls he'd seen that morning.

There was the keep in its hour of glory, granting hospitality to arriving pilgrims. A feast was laid, and fires burned bright, bridging the Christian and the Pagan. White-robed monks looked more akin to druids than friars.

And farther down the wall, older pieces still.

"Some of these date back further than the 8th century," Mrs. O'Reilly marked proudly.

Peter nodded, still studying these woven confessionals. His eyes were drawn to a black, hulking shape which leered from one dark corner of another feast scene.

"What does that represent?" he asked Mr. O'Reilly, pointing.

Mrs. O'Reilly put her hand to her lips as if surprised that he should ask.

"The mortal sin of gluttony, I should think," Mr. O'Reilly answered. But there was something in his tone which said more of sins of omission.

At the head of the chapel stood a small pulpit that seemed to be staring straight at Peter. Exquisitely carved pupils endlessly staring and mouth agape, Robin O' the Wood peered up through oaken leaves and acorns.

"You're welcome to use it if you wish," Mr. O'Reilly offered. "I understand you're a singer?"

Transfixed by the carved face in the pulpit, and Mrs. O'Reilly's negative—almost fearful—look to her husband, it took Peter a moment to realize that the old caretaker expected an answer.

"Oh, yes," he finally answered, flustered, "the acoustics must be grand."

"Wouldn't know," Mr. O'Reilly said, searching the room with his eyes, almost as if expecting something. "We don't come here much. Worries the missus."

Peter considered asking why for a moment, but was silenced by a slick, wet sound behind the pulpit. He was aware of the keen, briny taste of his testicles rising to his throat. Mrs. O'Reilly virtually melted onto her husband's arm.

"Baptismal's back there, and a sacred well left intact from the truly ancient days.

It's a natural water source, that well. Every now and again it'll burp and gurgle a bit. Can scare hell outta ya when you're not expecting it, but otherwise, harmless enough."

Peter's eyes traced the carapaces of the ceiling, and he wondered for a moment when this place last heard singing. Then he remembered the tapestries and the sudden slick-wet sound and the briny taste of his balls in the back of his throat and his stomach rolled. He led the way out of the chapel and back to the remainder of the tour.

After what seemed forever, they finally returned him to his room. On her way out the door, Mrs. O'Reilly turned abruptly and stood for several minutes, just staring at him.

He tried to be cool about it. Tried to pretend it wasn't unsettling, moved to the bed and unzipped his suitcase. But when she continued to stand there, he could not stop himself from inquiring what the matter could be.

"Oh, it's nothing," she said, suddenly jovial, as if she'd shaken off a caul. "It's just been so long since we've had anyone stay here, and you seem like such a nice young man. . . ."

It had been quite some time since anyone had referred to him as young, and, perhaps because of this, he did not count her wistful tone as anything foreboding.

"At any rate," and she was back to business again. "Dinner will be on the table promptly at six, and then the mister and I shall take our leave of you. Shall I get you anything then?"

"Yes," he said, after a moment's pause, "a saucer of milk."

"For the weefolk?" she asked, thoroughly charmed.

"No, for Gus."

She stared at him for a moment in complete puzzlement, then nodded as if in a daze and took her leave.

*Michelle Iacona*

☯ moon set I

moon set in through his window  
all through his bed in sapphires. how come  
then he lay stretched in bulrushes  
shallow water small frogs and large  
sang heavy, sounding moonstones?  
fry fishes swam nibbling at his pores  
blue eyes sapphires shining all down him.  
sky danced among the rushes, stars  
swung wide arcs in blue moon waters.  
he never remembered how he got there,  
but he wanted to sing with frogs  
and nip blue pores with minnows,  
wanted to bloom blue with sapphires  
and set late night country with moon.  
a tree ripe with orange fruits  
leaned over marsh edge. he was shaking  
with cold, finally stood, brushing  
sapphires from his clothes, wondering  
how frogs sang in frost-time. he ran home,  
stripped, toweled himself rough and raw,  
crawled into bed strewn with sapphires.

*Will Inman*

☯ moon set II

everything turns sacred. nothing was ever not so, but loss  
sharpens seeing. what mind tried to hold, now ribs  
are steep enough to carry.

my friendbrother  
has crossed over. having known him—illuminates  
everything in the path, all that comes to mind. i wish  
i could tell him what a bounty he continues  
to give me. perhaps he knows and can share that  
with himself.

i did not dream death could be such  
a gift. i was considering the waste, dark overtaking  
such a mind, such experience. now i see young minds  
young limbs, ready to take up his knowings in new  
ways, in fresh spirals of being and doing. there is no  
waste, no ceasing, only a sacred changing of selves,  
a swapping of focus, a stretching of reaches, new wakings  
beyond.

still, treasuring his presence in my life—gives  
the everyness to me in near things and in remote. i cry  
because i cannot tell him. i hope i am telling him now.

*Will Inman*

## ☪ UNDERTOW

I was swimming and riding the waves  
when one swell curled over me,  
slammed my body to the seafloor,  
churned and twisted, unrelenting.  
And what I had been avoiding  
hauled me out, sand scraping skin  
off my face. Terrible burn of the salt water.  
The shore glinted in the distance  
like a memory of childhood.  
There were others, sinking all around.  
When this happens, as it does,  
the thing to remember is not to  
struggle, not to pull anyone else  
under, when you go under.

*Larry Wayne Johns*

## ☿ THE QUICKENING

So quickly a mouth without words  
    (in the hush, a new word waits).

So quickly a body rendered defenseless  
    (in its helplessness, forgiveness).

So quickly rot in the roots  
    (in the roots pale larvae are under-  
taking their critical work).

So quickly the trees in leaf, and quickly  
    the rose clenches, unclenches

    its liquid red, and more slowly,  
but equally ravishing—pale yellow

shingling the serrated leaves—  
mosaic virus lays waste to the bush.

    And in the wasted hours, in days  
spent convalescing, in thirst

    and desolation, in this heart  
that tremors, liquid swish

    and spasm, before  
resuming its steadfastness,

in the cough and hocked  
phlegm, in the sneeze—testament  
of breath. Much too quickly, a body  
without breath. And in those final  
seconds, the brain still roiling, rest

assured, a single cell inside a cell  
will split, enfolding a little infinity.

*Larry Wayne Johns*



☞ For BJ: My Brother  
(Died 01/03/03)

Our lives  
lie scattered like so much dust  
grains of sand  
thrown against a person's face  
at a windy seashore  
each pebble of sand  
a person's life  
Our lives  
thrown like dust  
from the rear tire  
of a passing car . . .  
One minute we are alive  
the next dead  
our whole lives  
a series of photographs  
and what do we leave behind  
when we go?  
Old memories gone to dissipate  
in the moldering remains  
of an abandoned cemetery.  
My brother lies dead  
from AIDS in a North Carolina prison  
I cannot afford to bury him  
and my other brother will not help pay  
for a funeral  
so my brother will be disposed  
by the state  
in a crematoria  
or used as a practice body

for training doctors  
to practice their sutures . . .  
My father's ashes lie buried  
in a military cemetery  
near Camp Lejune, North Carolina  
and what is his legacy?  
My memories, his other children's  
memories, some yellowing slides,  
several World War II campaign  
medals, a plaque from the American  
Legion, and a series of photographs.  
I have my brother's possessions from the prison:  
They include sticks of gum  
and a pair of tennis shoes.  
After my father's funeral, I received  
enough money from his insurance  
to buy myself a pair of tennis shoes.  
My father's trailer park was paved over  
to build a pawnshop, his motel in Maryland  
replaced by a parking lot by the new owner  
and my mother's house,  
repossessed  
and she now stays in a nursing home  
What are we? Where are we going?  
What is our legacy? Where  
will we end our lives?  
Will we die in a nursing home of renal failure?  
Will we die in a hospital bed alone  
except for the prison guard  
sent to keep guard over us?

All we are, all we really are,  
and all we ever will be  
are the memories  
we leave behind:  
My brother getting me drunk legally  
on my 18th birthday (when it was legal  
to drink beer at 18), him wrestling me and beating me then,  
his strange presents, and his good  
but vainglorious intentions:  
Too much desire, not enough  
common sense, more dreams  
than a workable plan:  
I miss you, BJ  
for you remind me of what we  
all already should know:  
Our lives are scattered around us like  
so many photographs,  
one blink and in a second,  
we're gone—  
Like so many leaves  
thrown and kicked up  
by a pair of tennis shoes  
each piece of dust  
a complete  
life

*Jean Jones*

✿ COUNTRY BURYING

Midway across the pasture  
a heifer lifts  
her froth-slurred muzzle  
from the grassy feast,  
as a tiny line of cars, black beetles,  
creeps across the horizon.

Slowly, one at a time,  
the cars turn toward the hillside  
and draw to stop  
along the line of cedars.  
Car doors slam,  
a long box, dark and shiny,  
hefted from behind one floats  
across the hill, is set down.

All of this goes on far away,  
quiet. The cow lowers her head.  
Wind across the grasses draws  
a cloud shadow toward her,  
touching the land.  
Close by, a dragonfly  
flexes wings twice on a fence post,  
then flies away.

*Roger Jones*

## ☞ DOG SHOES

They are three-year-old canvas shoes, dirty and worn, grass-stained from my rounds of golfing, the toes in each gone, the rubber bottoms discolored. My wife calls them my "dog shoes"; she threatens to bag them in the garbage while I'm asleep or gone. But I keep them, believing I can get one more month of wear from them (I have long, long since gotten my thirteen dollars' worth). Presently, through the kindness of in-laws, I own a pair of Birkenstocks, a pair of liver-colored leather shoes, one pair of cowboy boots, and some walkers. But it is to these worn, worthless dog shoes that I keep returning. Across the room I spot them perched under a chair, or sitting one atop another in a corner, like boozy pals. They remind me of the single step that begins the thousand miles, of books I own which are falling apart, shirts I have almost worn out, cars I have driven until I can't lodge another mile on them. They make me recall my grandfather's house—so simple, sparse, and wooden, with a big splintery porch, and old khaki pants torn for rags in the restroom and kitchen. Or the smelly sneakers I wore as a kid—the ones I left under dad's bed until the odor woke him up and, half asleep, he put them on the back porch in the middle of the night. In the land that hollers Buy! Use! Discard! Buy more! these hearty items are an anomaly. I can strap the shoes on and set out, following as far as I can this ragged, crooked path, the only one worth taking.

*Roger Jones*

## ⌘ FAMILIAL

New Year's Day, late afternoon, everyone but you  
downstairs watching ballgames, while up here alone  
you feel a balloon fill up and rise over your head  
with its question, why am I loved? There's the bed,  
second-hand, scuffed up a bit, unmade, but yours;  
there's a pair of shoes kicked off across the room,  
and a half-drunk soda left over from last night.  
There are pictures on the wall, clothes in the dresser,  
the slow friendly tock-tock of the bedside clock.  
There's a quiet light overhead, and a window through which  
you can see it raining outside, gloom-dark, chilly.  
All your life you've heard about the terrible days  
long ago, and how lucky you are. Now you know  
it's so. These are the days you are allowed  
this inlet, a cove in which to dawdle and take stock.  
Will your future be so terrible when it arrives?  
Like a wobbly economy, love's numbers go up, down.

*Roger Jones*

## ☿ LAMAZE CLASS

*for R*

It was like a sleepover each week. We'd meet nights  
in the damp underroom of some bank—the wives  
round, in sweats, like swollen mangoes, the doting  
husbands dutiful and close at hand, servile drones.  
Holding pillows, covers, giddily expectant as  
children before Christmas, we hunched and listened  
as Coach taught the wives to breathe,  
the husbands to coax and soothe, like coxswains.  
How quickly we all became a unit, a graduating  
class, our senior trip a one-way cruise  
into Parenthood. Then the wives would recline  
on the floor, as if to be read a bedtime story,  
and we'd practice. Too innocent, we didn't yet  
know, love, that the strange *hoos* and *hees*, the whistles  
Coach taught you, you'd end up discarding quick  
in due time when time came, and you'd ask first,  
drowsily, for Demerol, then demand, in full grand  
blare of birth-pain, the Epidural (administered by  
a bearded anesthesiologist who, like an artist admiring  
his work, stood in the birth room doorway  
gauging the neural stupor he'd induced on you).  
There was something vivid, giddy, childlike,  
those nights, in thinking we could birth together  
naturally, man and woman as one, joined in belief  
breath itself could arrest one body's epic pain.

*Roger Jones*

## ✿ VITAL RECORDS

Down the long list of names and dates  
you run your finger until you find  
the familiar name, and the name  
of the man she married years ago.

Just seeing it reminds you again  
how it was that summer—long hot days,  
still hours, no word at all, until one day  
a short, terse letter wandered in.

That's how it ended. It was always  
that way in those days, back in college:  
the thunderbolt; the silence afterwards.

*Roger Jones*



4 PM: BAMBOO ROOM: HAPPY HOUR

Nature pinned to his sleeve,  
tattoos of leaves withering,  
drifting, shoulder to wrist,  
the hungry monkey  
glares at the countertop  
from his rusted perch  
and rubs his chapped palms.

Being of communion,  
endangered being,  
father, murderer, pack leader,  
shaman, trader, the highest  
of Samorini's evolutionary order,  
he howls lullabies between  
sips of tepid whiskey.

Decanters vibrate to his  
music, slide slowly on  
their smoky, mirrored shelves.  
The bartender looks at him,  
nods. Recalls winged blood  
and fur, wreckage from  
last week's row.

*Laughter, rounds of spiced  
rum on rocks, splashes  
of grenadine hinting at what  
was about to be. The monkey,  
the panther, their gladness.  
The monkey's mate, her unexpected  
arrival, her sadness. The blood.*

Alone now, except for the  
bartender. Alone now,  
the monkey picks at tufts  
of his hair. *Could the blood  
have stayed in their bodies?*  
Leonard Cohen answers  
From the jukebox:

*"I need you, I don't need you,  
I need you, I don't need you,  
and all of that jiving around . . . "*

*Sema Krishna*

## ☯ At Odd Times, Odder Friends

At odd times I recall  
odder friends who have passed this way  
and that.

Take Conway, the nation's leading amateur  
catastrophologist  
not currently in captivity.  
He's read, and remembers, everything  
about all of the great disasters in recorded history  
and most of the others, too.

I never passed him in the hall  
that he didn't tell me  
of another whorehouse fire or an earthquake in  
Helsinki.

The office favorite, his rendition quite grabbing,  
was the Great Boston Molasses Flood  
of 1802.

I can't tell it like he did,  
and I won't even try.  
I guess you had to be there.

*E. Waverly Land*

✿ BARITONE SOLO

Listening to Brahms Requiem  
on the radio  
the station drifting in and out  
I can hear my baritone  
singing twenty years ago  
A voice I cannot recreate today

The poems I wrote twenty long years  
ago  
I could not write today

The laugh I laughed  
twenty short years ago  
would not strike me funny today  
but the seriousness I cried with then would

Things turn so many corners  
in twenty years  
You turn enough of those corners  
and you return to where you stood  
once upon a time  
only to find urban renewal  
beat you there

You find so many reasons  
you can't afford to live  
in that neighborhood anymore.

*E. Waverly Land*

## ☯ Health Profile

Are you now  
or have you ever been  
allergic to:

bean sprouts  
pickled eggs  
dandelion wine  
rodent hair  
broken glass?

Are you susceptible  
to prolonged bleeding from the scalp  
to black heads, pimples and warts,  
to stigmata of the groin?

Do you have a family history  
of TB or not TB  
of sanity  
of multiple shiftlessness  
or Dutch Elm Disease?

Does any member of your family closely  
resemble a Yorkshire Terrier?

Have you ever had mumps, measles, chickenpox, or  
the heartbreak of disco fever?

Have you ever wished you were  
a porch railing in New Orleans?

Have you ever fallen in love  
with a sheep,  
but the sheep broke it  
off?

Do you carry Blue Cross/Blue Shield  
or do you drag it behind you  
in a little red wagon?

And what did you answer when Jimi Hendrix asked  
Are you experienced?

*E. Waverly Land*

☞ WHAT MIGHT SUSTAIN US

What is a beggar but one  
who reaches into the mouth of a lion?  
Why shouldn't there be mercy  
as the geese hope for bread  
from your hand? The tall man  
takes off his glasses and sings  
to the child. What are the uses of love?  
The sky gives us something,  
even the brown weeds,  
little sadnesses that warm our bones.

*Mercedes Lawry*

☞ Dad,

if you want  
to leave us now,  
go ahead: I won't be angry.

You said  
we'd meet again, one day,  
in another world.

For me, it would suffice to lie  
down by your side in that  
old churchyard, facing toward the mountains:

to rest like that for a long, long time,  
the two of us, motionless and quiet.

*John Lawson*



## ✿ Testament

We spoke slowly, calmly, each in turn,  
In tones that grew more hushed as evening  
Bunched outside the windows: how, without him, none  
Would ever be the same: not cattle in the fields,  
Not the spreading fields themselves, not mountains, whose  
Sharp rising in the middle distance showed  
Where all extension ends and, beyond,  
Inscrutable beginnings.

Yet we knew  
This conversation was the sort we'd learned,  
Perfected in the logic of his presence, and that, so,  
All would truly be the same as when he sat  
Among us, howsoever radically changed:  
Cattle, fields, mountains, windows, breath  
Of conversation, and we, the speakers ourselves, woven  
In a complex whole, embodying his resurrection and our own  
Even as the tomb held fast his bones  
And evening fell around us.

*John Lawson*

☼ AKHMATOVA

The woman dresses French, drinks Russian.  
Her incendiary stanzas make the air hectic  
around the table of literati at a café  
in newly named Leningrad.  
Gradually they are dragged from their chairs  
and shadowed until they vanish  
Soon she knows that the revolution  
is weak but bitter tea,  
that her words have enormous weight.  
Boats navigate the Neva by the lamp  
on her desk and her stiletto pen.  
A single line, a life even,  
might end with a knock at the door.  
Mandelstam is gone yet his words  
spend each night in her rumpled sheets.  
Mayakovsky chokes on his own rhetoric.  
It is said that in the West  
literature dies by indifference.  
In these mute rooms  
even the walls listen for coded poems.  
Many become fluent in such silence.  
Heavy as they are her words fly  
through the walls of Krete Prison  
from lips to ears to lips.

The sun itself has been exiled  
leaving only a season of Winter.  
All that remains is faith and uncertainty,

the light they make.  
She takes her tea  
defiantly with raspberry jam.  
She is the woman at the train station  
as if expecting the return of a son,  
a gust of arctic air  
in a sky empty of ravens  
or a fruit vendor offering an apple  
juiced and forbidden.

*Norm Levine*

✿ COMING UP FOR AIR

I had an archetype of a mother.  
When I was sick she saw  
beyond symptoms into the theatre  
of opposing forces.

She could sniff out original causes,  
how I got it, what to blame—  
the three sweaters I didn't wear  
or the dreaded draft  
she recognized as miasma.  
To do battle with that noxious fume  
as it seeped under the window sill  
she steamed the room with vapors  
of benzoin and eucalyptus,  
released the rubbing alcohol.  
Germs had nothing to do with it,  
just good air against the bad.

From my bed the wind was visible  
in the trees and I wondered  
if that was the foul breath of dragons  
or a gust of fresh air,  
an invisible knight blowing in  
on his invisible horse.  
She had set the scene.  
Now it was mine to choreograph,  
which force would carry the day.  
And when I was pronounced healthy  
and banished to the great outdoors  
it was to inspire me

with large draughts of oxygen  
sufficient for the next scenario  
and the next.

*Norm Levine*

## ☼ Alligator River

I paddle the tea-coloured river  
With little current, it barely flows,  
but flows.

From the stern,  
I turn us three around fallen trees,  
dodge the hanging branches  
through the watered pattern  
of the cedar swamp.

I read that alligators  
swim up this black water-river  
from the shore.  
It's been too cold to see them,  
but I look anyway.  
I find them in fallen, sunken trees,  
eyes and snout, or tail and back.

I remember that they lay on gathered silt,  
wonder if those bubbles rise  
from tough skin-nostrils.  
If I fell in, would one surface near me  
as in my companion's story?  
Does one rest beneath me  
or swim, hidden, alongside us?

One of us fears their approach  
as we're moving,  
every second,  
into their river.  
Once, twice my paddle strikes

or is struck.  
I wait for the snap  
of a power sprung-jaw.  
It doesn't come, but I wait

One may.

*April Link*

⌘ THE BRIDGE

I see the bridge  
How short the strides across  
The slickness of the far side  
The euphoria of  
Slipping into madness

*April Link*



✿ PASSING BY

Colonies of fine-toothed zippers  
Fasten between flowers

The heavy sweetness they seek  
A scented halo of the trees

The air curves warm in the shade  
So I sit

*April Link*

☼ caspar david friedrich: *two men  
contemplating the moon*, 1830

what did they think was  
to be found on it?

answers?

better to gaze upon a woman's  
nakedness, as goya did, or upon  
titans in their agony, or listen  
to the mozart *requiem*.

the moon is not a woman.  
a woman is a woman.  
even a bimbo beats a symbol.

the genteel always occupy a  
gentle path. this is the Old World.  
this is the Very Old World. rounded  
and pounded and eroded and requiring  
eroticism in its undergarments.

there is no life in any corner of the  
universe, and all the life there is, is all  
around them. lightning has blasted the  
roots of yggdrasil, and roots and limbs  
have ever since blared back.

trees are dryads.  
trees and dragons.

trees can talk, and the medusa  
was a tree.

this great tree is a goya gesture,  
vocals by el gecko greco.

contemplation is as empty as  
a pink emotion.

these two romantic men are  
idiots and dressed like dolts:  
our century was right to paint  
them out of pictures.

as jeffers did. picasso, celine,  
knut hamsun, cummings,  
hemingway, picasso.

nature is alive (i guess) and  
cities, until populated, but to  
stare at sublimity is freeze-dried,  
cryogenic.

*Gerald Locklin*

☞ the teacher

at 70 wayne shorter is the teacher.  
in his quartet, which i hear  
in our campus auditorium,  
he has surrounded himself  
with the best of the young,  
sidemen who have already distinguished themselves  
as leaders of their own groups,  
on tour and in studio:

i've already written about danilo perez  
at the jazz bakery,  
when he was promoting his grammy-nominated album,  
*central avenue*,  
a panamanian virtuoso who has voyaged through the latino  
and the arabic into the ellingtonian  
and is at ease with wayne's excursions in the  
free-form actualizations of concepts  
within the macrocosmic symphonic structures.

john patitucci, on bass,  
one of our own from long beach state,  
and brian blade on drums,  
have simply played with everyone  
and can do it all on their instruments,  
but there is always one place more to go,  
and that's where wayne is taking them.

and for his pedagogic models,  
wayne himself had those iconic teachers,  
coltrane, miles, and blakey.

the latter especially, like diz,  
devoted his later years to passing on  
what he had learned and invented  
to the luminaries of the future,  
even as he absorbed from them  
the revitalizing energies of youth  
and their serendipitous and synergistic  
perspectives.

thus does the wise man,  
as he journeys towards eternity, infinity,  
breathe in, breathe out  
embrace and be embraced,  
lead and allow his intuitions to be led,  
empty his trove in order that  
it be replenished,  
receive from his own giving,  
love and be loved until all is subsumed in  
a love supreme.

*Gerald Locklin*

⌘ neo rauch: *weiche*, 1999

pickax a hole with  
nothing to put into it.

make your insignia  
traffic signals  
of reversal or circularity or embrace,  
and abjure the etymological.

place a plastic pilot  
at the controls of  
a nose-cone that's  
already crashed.

an evergreen and amber oak  
fork from a shared trunk.

florence nightingale had tits  
as useless as mother superior's  
(in theory).

why does a woman with nice legs  
wear shoes with metal toes?

i don't speak german,  
but i do read weather pages.

why does the worker work?  
the worker works because  
a worker works.

ask darwin and walt disney,  
dickens and the noble drone:

"heigh-ho, heigh-ho: it's off to  
nibelungenland we go."

*Gerald Locklin*

☞ i guess it's a guy thing

"wouldn't you like a girl friday?"  
she asks me. "i mean, if you ever  
struck it rich wouldn't you hire me  
as your girl friday  
to type your poems,  
and send them out,  
and keep track of them,  
and deal with publishers and signings and  
public relations and reservations and requests  
for prefaces/blurbs/interviews/letters of rec,  
and your income taxes?"

"what about my social calendar?"  
i ask?

"you mean your *sex life*?  
*i* would be your sex life.  
you wouldn't need anyone else?  
wouldn't i be all the sex life that you'd need,  
especially at *your age*?"

"oh yes," i say, "sure. of course,"  
and it's safe enough to say so,  
because i'm never going to  
strike it rich anyway.

*Gerald Locklin*

✿ duncan hannah: *regarding mona*

what does it take to render  
the image of a woman erotic?

first, that she be partially clothed,  
as, in this case, with tight, white stockings,  
squeezing just above the knee,  
the left a half-inch higher  
than the right;

that the hair of the head  
and that of the pussy  
(no vagina showing)  
match . . . in this case with  
a thick, russet wiriness.

in this case that the arms  
be thin, but the breasts be ample,  
the nipples pale and virginal and  
pointing asymmetrically,  
like the eyes  
of jean-paul sartre  
used to.

that the hands be folded  
behind the narrow buttocks,  
and the tiny facial features  
create a modicum of shyness,  
maybe a mixture of shame and desire,  
curiosity,  
fear at war with the



desire to express oneself,  
the heretical pulse of becoming  
the object of the gaze.  
the shadow on the pastel wall.

the recognition of the girl  
that she will never be  
this powerfully young again.

"beauty is immortal in the flesh,"  
to misquote wallace stevens.

a butterfly pinned to eternity.  
the highest-speed exposure  
of the still life.

*Gerald Locklin*

☯ munakata shiko: a *self-portrait with joy*, 1963

lots to look at in  
this color woodcut:

creativity, sex, cacti,  
cooking, travel, flowers,  
cigarettes, stars, and tradition.

all the accoutrements of  
one man's life and work.

the symbols/cymbals do indeed  
strike sparks and clangs of joy  
against each other.

i also notice several sake bowls.

*Gerald Locklin*

☯ *munakata shiko: a happy family circle:*  
*utensils for tea ceremony, from compositions on tanizaki*  
*jun'ichiro's poems, 1956*

yes, everything is there  
(you can read up on it in  
*rituals* by cees notboom),

except the happy family.

*Gerald Locklin*

☞ the nuttiest test

after opening a tin of  
deluxe mixed nuts,  
i always eat the politically correct  
but bland brazil nuts first,  
just to get them over-and-done-with.

i have also learned to  
work first and play later,  
not to count my chickens  
before they're hatched  
(or even afterwards),  
to defer pleasure—but also to allow  
myself the self-promised rewards  
at the end of the tasks,  
so as not to lose credibility  
with my own super-ego and id.

i suspect a researcher  
(the nutty professor?!)  
would find that those who put off eating  
the brazil nuts until last  
are not especially productive people.

*Gerald Locklin*

☼ toad temporarily puts his false modesty aside

and says that he finds it is usually other poets,  
less productive ones,  
who criticise him for the indiscriminate number  
of poems that he writes  
and allows to see publication.

he also finds that in his own  
obviously biased opinion  
the worst of his poems  
(this one perhaps)  
often have something that  
the best of theirs  
do not.

*Gerald Locklin*

## ☯ shuttered windows

i'm sitting at the office computer  
on a wasted afternoon  
because the box on the screen reads,

UNABLE TO LOCATE SERVER.

the server is the university.

the server is sitting on a desk  
smack dab in the middle of  
the university

and it can't even find  
the fucking place?!

*Gerald Locklin*

✿ no, i tried my foot at them

"how did we miss him  
when he was alive?"  
they ask me.

"why weren't we told about  
this extraordinary man's great work?"

i have to tell them that  
i've already answered all such questions  
in a book, to the extent, at least,  
that i am able to,  
that most of what i have to say about bukowski  
is contained in that one little book.

they haven't bothered to read  
any of the books about him.  
it is easier to ask us to reduce our writings  
to a few notes easily jotted on a pad  
or transcribed from a machine.  
also it is cheaper.

i guess it could be worse:  
they could be asking me to give them  
twenty-five word summaries  
of lacan or derrida.

at the end they ask, politely,

"did you ever try your hand  
at poems yourself?"

*Gerald Locklin*

☼ now *that* was a poetry mag

a lot of mediocre bukowski  
has been published since his death.  
that's okay: he would have wanted it published.  
he never trusted anyone,  
not even himself,  
to decide definitively what was and wasn't  
the best of his work,  
and even the lesser work of a great writer  
can be of enormous interest and value.  
i have derived tremendous pleasure, for instance,  
from novels by hemingway that others—  
inexplicably to me—purport to find laughable.  
furthermore i'm sure bukowski would have looked upon  
his uncollected works—  
again, as hemingway did—  
as an insurance policy for those he left behind.

but if you want what are, in my opinion,  
with few exceptions the best of his poems,  
invest in a complete run of the 156 or so issues  
of *the wormwood review*.  
its editor, marvin malone, was the greatest poetry editor  
of the second half of the twentieth century  
and, without slighting others, the best editor  
of bukowski's work as well.

you may also find some passable work  
by writers less well known than buk  
in those thin volumes,  
maybe even a virtual history of a certain style



that wove its way through that century,  
maybe a couple such styles.  
and covers by some fair-to-middlin' artists:  
saul steinberg, for instance.

*Gerald Locklin*

✿ BUTTERFLY PAVILLION

Once I envied girls  
with time to paint their nails  
comb out milkweed hair.

Zebra Stripes, Cabbage Whites  
& Spice Plant Swallowtails.  
The Monarch caterpillar  
devours milkweed to poison captors.

Then, there's the one come straight  
from pupa,  
without mouth parts.  
No way to eat:  
this moth has only hours to mate  
& die: lives on psyche.  
*Psyche*: Greek for butterfly and soul.

Now free  
as the Painted Ladies that light  
on my white shirt, I want out of here.  
Do they?

*Glenna Luschei*

## ☼ CHICK PEAS

Once you start something moving  
you can't turn it back.

What a heartbreaking afternoon  
when I persuaded my kindergarten  
teacher to march the class to the chick  
pea garden. In the morning  
it sparkled yellow, blue, lilac and pink.  
When we got there, all the blossoms  
had withered under heat.

No one would ever believe me again.

Decades later, I learned the word  
*ephemeral*. Grab it when you can.  
and the word *inexorable*. Once set  
in motion it won't turn back.  
The Model T wasn't going too fast  
and Tippy wasn't really chasing it  
but somehow he got caught

under the wheels. He high tailed  
it back to the yard. I prayed  
he would be okay. He died  
in my arms. I couldn't do anything  
but watch it all play out.

That bright morning when my children  
and ex drove off for Alaska, the man  
who broke up my marriage and I

strolled through a field of chick peas.  
All of a sudden he too vanished.

Scared, I discovered him  
hiding face down in the vines.  
What a jerk. But what has been started  
must be played out.

*Glenna Luschei*

✿ PICA

All the people  
I didn't write to to thank for my  
Pyrex are dead:

the tin recipe box  
my ex-husband's mother gave me:  
her 3" x 5" cards I learned to follow.  
I gave up on the treadle machine.

In this recipe for date pudding  
I let it cool  
just as she typed.

I came to love her pica script  
precise, small boned as she.  
She typed my master's thesis.  
She changed the baby's diaper.

I accepted her message, "Forego  
your heart's desire."  
When our anniversary came,  
she warned, "Now don't ask for silver."

*Glenna Luschei*

☞ The Rain is Full of Ghosts Tonight

*After Sonnet XLII—Enda St. Vincent Millay*

Dark fog and rain; a hole in the sky  
As the night comes pouring in, thick  
Silver, and the sound of drops hitting the  
Asphalt is the sound of a million coins  
Dissolving.

In another country  
There are children, begging for coins  
On a night the moon turns silver.  
We could make love here  
But the ghosts between us are real.

Now off the icy coast of  
Alaska; the rain, more snow  
Than rain, frosts the silver air.  
We stand by the ship's rail  
While the glaciers calve  
In the fog, hear the small  
Explosions as the slivered chunks  
Enter the sea.

Later you sleep while  
Outside the long twilight of summer  
Refuses the dark. That silver streak  
In the sky could be anywhere,  
Any northern land, nameless,  
Where they summon the ghosts of past  
Lives, of ancestors and lovers, into

Being, chanting remarkable vowels  
Like Kaddish.

How do we remember except with water?  
Ferryboats crossing from Bainbridge Island to Seattle,  
Bridging lovers, those we have lost  
To time and death. Do the dead feel  
The dampness we give them, those quick  
Tears that come from our deep bodies,  
As we call up the faces that are  
Permanently silver, stamped like coins  
In our memory? Vintage years. The young  
Who never imagine growing old,  
The pillow empty of indention  
Wet with damp loss, the body holding  
Emptiness just in reach.

And the joy of memory: of thick rain  
In the November afternoon, the water sluicing  
Down in silver rivers speckled with  
Pebbles that mark the gravestones  
Of those we refuse to forget:  
The thousand names of water.

*Adrienne Marcus*

## ☼ Rattlers

About this time of year, I like to think of rattlesnakes in their breeding and wintering dens, softly, quietly underground, twined like roots with each other, dreaming in small prisms and equations of awareness, slowly evolving the coil of bodies from outer to inner, as do bees, after warmth, moving back from the cool edge slowly.

When the sun warms the rock enough, about when the redbud blooms and the first leaves of the oak unfurl, a few will slide out into the sunshine and let the blessed actinic rays penetrate their scales, stir their blood, and hasten the heart-beat. Eventually they will feel the hunger their winter's fast has brought and will move into the woods, thermal sensors alert for warm, small bodies, nutrients.

Then more and more, and return to couple, writhe, hot excited by the sun and pheromones. Then to hunt again, mouse, vole, chipmunk, baby rabbit whole. Snakes do not have ticks or fleas, but mites are everywhere—in your eyelash roots as you read this—on spider's knees, and on other mites do smaller mites subsist, in crannies of unimaginable tinyness. And inside their guts, parasites with parasite inside them and on. As you and snake upon the world.

What back yard is not more vast than China through time entire? Each snake's scales are feathers or hair transformed, as turtle's carapace is hair made one and hard.

Once on the malpais before dawn, I arose to do my business, walked some yards away on ground with scattered black lumps of



lava. I squatted, mused, then noticed the rock I had squatted beside had scales. Was a melanistic rattler, coiled, waiting for a breakfast rodent from a nearby nest. He never even glanced at me, as far as I could tell. Too big to eat, too stupid to worry about. I moved away.

Another in the Organs fifty years ago, an April morning in the early sun, a flat rock on a steep slope, the only route I could take, and a fat rattler somnolent, cooled to No-Mind carelessness and ease. I stepped over him and went my way.

*Howard McCord*

☿ BEHIND HIS EYES

Wearily, the aging man reclines. Sun  
Sears its arc against the tree line.  
From long habit his eye evades  
The chair empty at his side,  
His face composed as for each fish  
He's failed to hook, as for each goal.

A Gibson at the hour of resolve—  
Filtered light powdering away—  
And the motives of an afternoon  
Slackening, releasing their grip:

To pick out a meaningful thread  
Seems an imperative of dusk  
As melodies fall silent  
While night's pricked pinlights  
Have yet to preempt the day.  
Iced liquid sharpens clarity,  
Ever-inward-turning thought.  
Reflection displaces decision;  
The scene is circumscribed.

Some inward shift is warranted—  
Not indolence, something closer  
To a felt rationale for day—  
Resolve without thought of gain.

In a flash, a moment,  
Quite abruptly his thought conjures—  
With no trace of self-pity—"Soon  
I'll be of the dust at sunset that  
Billows along and down the way.  
Some day I'll catch the clarity of gin."

*Peter McNamara*

## ☯ Sometimes

while the attendant is filling my gas tank at JOMO, I just sit there

and focus on the dirt on my windshield.  
i h  
n s i l d.  
d e

That's one of the few times I really see my windshield.

Why do our windows have to be dirty to get their due?

I didn't notice that the attendant had finished until he opened my door. And then, still, I didn't hear the price the first time he said it.

—I had just noticed for the first time that set into that dutiful and attentive expression, were the saddest eyes I had ever seen . . .

*Tyler McPeck*

## ☯ The Leak

On the way out,  
I hand a homeless man my pen.  
I know from his request,  
from the smug lines in the depleted meat about his face,  
that I am already leaking—  
leaking compassion,  
understanding,  
leaking kinship.

The things we hold in.

My small gift releases the cries of skinny children to my sailing yacht in Egypt,  
the Nile.

"Un stylo! Un stylo!"

Bubbling from the depths . . .

Better with a crust of bread from the looks of them.

The dark-faced man angling the keel on the other side of the boat,  
on the other side of the boat,  
somehow grasps the uncomfortable stench emanating from myself  
and the Canadian tourist  
beside me.

Changing directions with the turn of the keel,  
away from the small rafts that the children paddle with their thin, wet arms.

The approach of a retarded woman wanting bus fare brings me back.

My second gift confirms the unsound condition of my vessel.

I'm leaking.

*Tyler McPeck*

## ☼ AN AFTERNOON OF SUN AND SHADE

The sun paused near the top of a royal palm and shone clearly around lengthening shadows on the descending arc of its passage over a backyard landscape. Gray-brown dirt showed in spots through the unmowed grass behind a white clapboard house. Four old tires formed soccer goals at both ends of a solid patch of lawn along a white wooden tree, its door squeaking back and forth like a huge leaf moved by the occasional touch of an unseen hand. A weathered wooden swing hung from the branch of a grapefruit tree and swayed silently, bumping into the trunk with each back-swing, patiently waiting for Douglas and Madeleine to sit there together as they often have.

"Douglas, come see this bug," Madeleine said to her husband, as she sat with her typewriter at a wooden picnic table in the shade of the grapefruit tree and a mango tree.

Douglas looked up from his notebook at his wife sitting in the shade-speckled sunlight, framed like a Renoir by the trees and the faded red table that served as her desk. He moved his notebook off his knee and onto the arm of his wooden lawn chair. He placed the blue cap onto his pen and slid it into his shirt pocket. Rising slowly, he stretched like a sleepy cat and walked across the six feet of lawn to his wife's afternoon office.

A tiny piece of fuzzy debris waddled slowly across a manila envelope on which a map had been drawn slightly off-center. Douglas and Madeleine moved their heads close to the insect, which would have been perfectly camouflaged had it been almost anywhere but on the surface of the paper envelope.

"Do you think this little creature collected the stuff on its back, or do you suppose it's all really part of his body?" Douglas asked his wife.

"I don't really know, but he handles the load quite well," she replied.

The insect soon stepped off the envelope and onto the table where it was only slightly less noticeable. Douglas peeled a piece of red paint off the edge of the table and placed it in the insect's path. The insect stopped when it came to the paint peel and walked around it.

Douglas turned to Madeleine and conjectured, "Do you think he knew I was

going to pick him up?"

"I guess that's possible, but more likely he just didn't want to walk over something he could easily go around," Madeleine reasoned.

"I suppose," Douglas conceded, "but maybe he just didn't like the paint chip. Maybe he would walk onto a leaf, something from his natural habitat."

Douglas picked up a grapefruit leaf from the ground, still mostly green but with the tip drying and curling to form a little brown tunnel. He placed the leaf in the path of the insect so that its most likely place of entry would be the curl. The insect walked unhesitatingly onto the leaf, right into the tunnel. Douglas smiled at Madeleine. She returned his smile with a narrowing of her eyes. Douglas picked up the leaf and placed it back on the ground.

They both squatted down to see if the bug would emerge. The insect walked out of the tunnel, off the leaf, and onto the black, moist earth where the only thing distinguishing it from the dried leaves, stones, grass, and twigs on the ground was its regular forward motion.

Madeleine patted Douglas on the shoulder and returned to her typewriter, as Douglas returned to his chair.

Madeleine pulled the page out from her typewriter and used a pair of scissors to cut out what she had just written. She carefully glued her clipping onto the page partially covered with the map and then put a new piece of paper into the typewriter. She looked up through the moving, pivoting grapefruit leaves toward the sunlight that blazed into her brain. Sitting up as if drawn by an invisible string attached to the center of her head, Madeleine balanced herself with the world on a fulcrum of light.

Just then ten-year-old James came running through the gate in the white wooden fence that bordered the yard. "Look what I found!"

James scampered over like a puppy and stood as if wagging his tail, his straw brown hair flopping like droopy ears onto his shoulders, holding a little green parakeet in his hands.

Hearing her son's voice, Madeleine turned from the sun and then stood up

when she saw the prize that he held. "Good heavens, James. Is she alive?"

"Yeah. Let's take care of it. Could we?"

"The poor creature, I don't think there's much hope for her."

Douglas smiled. "I think your mother's right. I don't think she has much time left."

The parakeet breathed unevenly but didn't seem afraid in James' hands. It then closed its eyes and stopped breathing.

Douglas stood up carefully placing his notebook on the arm of his chair and his pen in his pocket. "I think she's gone. Come on, James."

Douglas and James went through the gate and disappeared behind the garage. Madeleine sat back down and closed her eyes.

She remembered her own father, a tall man with muscular arms and a large bushy mustache that always tickled when he kissed her. She remembered how he smelled of sharp, clean air on cold winter evenings after a day of hunting in the Everglades. She remembered one evening when her father brought home a doe he had just shot, how he came marching proudly into the kitchen through the back door with the doe draped over his shoulders, holding her with one hand and his gun with the other. Madeleine remembered the doe's eyes, open wide as if looking for her fawns that would never know where she was.

Through her eyelids Madeleine again saw the sunlight as it maneuvered around the grapefruit leaves above. A breeze blew her hair just enough so she could hear delicate fingers playing softly, as the grapefruit leaves applauded the performance. From the park across the street, she heard the rhythm of thousands of needle-thin leaves rubbing together in the Australian Pines and the voices of children that blended into an unrehearsed melody. From farther away, she heard the muffled roar of traffic, then a crow overhead announcing itself, or maybe acknowledging someone else.

Opening her eyes, the sounds faded, and the light returned and again gave way to sound as a car stopped in the street, just beyond the white wooden fence, and music blazed out of its windows:

Listen to the wind so slow,  
low across your own shadow.  
Listen to it shimmer and grow,  
long as the sun goes low.  
Listen to the wind echo,  
low into the long ago.  
So many ways to know,  
how like the wind you go.

Tires screamed a defiant plea and then burned a signature onto the asphalt, sending the smell of smoldering rubber over the white wooden fence to where Madeleine sat, eyes fixed unfocused on a fluttering leaf. She placed one hand on her stomach as her body filled with sky and the other over her eyes to hold herself in. Madeleine smiled as the sun leaked through her fingers.

Douglas and James reappeared through the gate, Douglas with a shovel and James with a cardboard box holding the body of the parakeet. They walked to the corner of the yard used as a cemetery for such occasions.

Madeleine stood up from her table and walked over to the funeral as James patted down the earth with his hands to form a slight mound over the bird. She stood next to Douglas as he stood still and quiet.

"God rest her soul," said James as he placed a seagull feather into the dirt mound so that it stood straight. He looked at his mother.

"God rest her soul," Madeleine repeated.

A strong gust of wind startled all of the leaves on the surrounding bushes and the overhanging trees. Madeleine's hair blew into her eyes and across her mouth. James looked into the wind towards the sun. Douglas walked quickly to his chair and gathered up his notebook that had already blown onto the seat and picked up his pen off the ground.

Madeleine ran to her table and picked up her papers that had blown onto the lawn. She put them along with the one on which she had been typing into the



manila envelope. She unplugged her typewriter from the orange extension cord that emerged through a hole in the screen covering her bedroom window. She carried the typewriter and the envelope through the back door into the kitchen. Douglas followed as James ran in ahead of him.

After putting her work away, Madeleine stood in the kitchen contemplating dinner while James went into the bathroom to wash his hands. Douglas sat in a blue stuffed arm chair by a window as the light of the lowering sun shone warm through the glass. He opened his notebook and read:

Despite the unpredictability of so much of what happens around me, and  
Regardless of the uncertainty of my own perceptions, the incomprehensible  
fact that it all exists is evidence enough for me that life is meaningful, but  
I still suspect that even when my body is nourishing the earth and  
fertilizing the grass, I will somehow continue to wonder.

Outside a flock of seagulls flew over the backyard toward their resting place by the sea. The swing stopped bumping against the trunk of the grapefruit tree, as the wind followed the gulls to the east. Douglas and Madeleine would sit and swing some other day. A tiny insect walked slowly and deliberately across the arm of the wooden lawn chair, around a piece of peeling red paint, and over the bare grey wood. A green parakeet landed on a branch of the mango tree above the picnic table, as the sun disappeared behind the house next door, beyond the white wooden fence.

*Don Meagher*

## ✿ MY FIRE

I read on the weather page this morning  
that tonight would be a full moon in a clear sky.  
I went about my work with anticipation and hope.

Walking home later, the dark above dripped onto the brim of my hat  
and wet my shoulders with cold.  
No stars in the dreary sky  
and nothing of the promised moon.

I entered through the front,  
leaving wet shoes by the door and hat and coat on the back of a chair.  
I crumpled the local section and stuffed it into the fireplace.  
I lit a match to promises that writhed and expired into flames  
under carefully placed logs.

I thaw and soon melt.

The back door opens by itself,  
as sparks of light in a vast dark surround a bright orb  
above the hills in the east.  
No disappointment in the sky tonight,  
only space and fire and me.

*Don Meagher*

## ☪ MARY'S TIME

She stood on the shore  
and watched the sun rise over her shoulder  
and set at her feet.

Wind passed through her hair  
like fingers of water through grains of sand.  
Gulls circled her head,  
and a halo of stars appeared in the sky.

She turned around to face the moon  
and dropped to her knees in thanks.  
Each breath filled her body with light  
as she closed her eyes and rose.

*Don Meagher*

✿ Breathe Deeply

The boy hugs his small  
Dog to gasping.  
The dog nips and catches  
Only air and cloth.

Love is learned in all things  
Left undone and incomplete.  
The hand restrained becomes  
caress—a first step.

Much is asked of boys.

*June Milby*

## ☞ Drumbeat in B Minor

Paid. Cash. Credit. Life.  
Never enough. Never enough.  
Word. Floating Word. Enough  
Belief. Love. Devotion. Honor. Faith.  
Insufficient. Explain to Boxes.  
Boxes to parse. Boxes to parsel.  
Compact. Tidy. Measured.

Country. Mountains. Seas.  
Wonders. Oceans. Borders. Alliances.  
Trusts. Values. Guns. Boxes.

Value. Respect. Credit. Treasure. Defend.  
Protect. Proclaim. Own. File.  
Boxes, Boxes to Check. Credit  
Count. Measure.

King. Divine right. Liege lord.  
Place. To know. To card. To put.  
To inherit. To rule. To serve. To  
Oppress. To kneel. To Boxes.

Debt due. Kneel.  
Liege Lord points the place.  
Prepare. Word in boxes.  
Count. Measure. File. Label  
Word. Country.  
Kneel. The debt is due.

*June Milby*

☼ Farewell Poems of Yukio Mishima

who committed hara-kiri  
at the headquarters  
of the Eastern Corps  
of the Ground Self-Defense Forces,  
Ichigaya, Tokyo, Nov. 25, 1970

1.  
For many years  
he knew restraint,  
the warrior with  
the restless sword.  
But now the time  
has come to rise.

2.  
The night winds  
whispered to me:  
Falling petals  
find a truth  
denied to blossom  
on the bough.

*Yukio Mishima*  
*Translated by Alan Ireland*

✿ AN INVASION

*for Hartley & Lily*

In the din of vile news  
survives a boy, a girl,  
manifold flowers & veiny,

the blossoms, despite glass  
containers, a home mistaken  
for chronic absence—yet play,

yet bring the light beyond;  
a portrait of the wedded  
on canvas sadly dented

where a visitor did not see—  
tulips, pink, flare beside  
two short blackeyed sunflowers,

inhabit their table life eloquently;  
bodies left their chairs, look—  
in four directions as if by resignations.

The earth, even as winter clings  
flowers, as bone becomes water  
& two children press boots into mud's

new stream—to make a river. Down the hill  
a neighbor flies his flag—an overt pride  
now making his porch seem less friendly.  
In hard times the messages feel icy clear,  
& divisive. On holidays: it opens doors.

But why weren't we so moved before this hour

—& by stock symbols? Effort made them be,  
words were spoken & muscles pushed  
violently, color was pounded from the life,

rooted things, transpositions, combats  
an apathy & daringly trestles miscalculation.  
They are brighter in their blood, mine,

than all worldly lights combined,  
more joyous in inventions,  
untaken by these costly, callous, crimes.

*Peter Money*



## ☞ Ode to Culture

Grey flashes of airborne wraiths pull my eyes lusting  
to a playground of dreams and prayers.

I gnaw gently on the starvation that life serves  
And relinquish a new skin each day, willing  
to embellish the soft pain upon awakening.

If God sees my ritual then HE, She, it questions  
the logic, sure as any old heart would a wilting rose.

And maybe that is why I cry, looking at trees,  
tears that could purge the drought out of Canaan;  
trellises

that overflow

spilling down each level

Until the wounds of the earth  
are no longer warm  
from the blades of its enemy;

Its traitors like black widows sharing a den.

*Stephen Moody*

## ✿ PATRIOTS

The Parthian version of the Bacchae  
used the hacked head of Crassus for a prop.

Somehow that ancient atrocity re-enacted  
pushes the newer horror Over the Top.

Head piled on head, those pyramids at Mohaks  
should please each lean hyena in us all

as terminus, the strutting room we lack,  
possessions beyond bounds, ourselves, or right,

or wrong, who'd flay them for their skins  
tightened on drums and drum all night.

*Michael Mott*

✿ "Pavlova's Home, Ivy House, North End,  
is Open to the Public."

I begged not to be taken there.

Was Pavlova the woman all in white  
who ended as a dead bird?  
Or was Pavlova a man  
who left the heads of dogs  
at the end of a coil of tubes,  
the dogs smiling  
like the Cheshire Cat  
still barking  
still begging for food  
when a bell rang?

What would happen  
when they opened the front door  
on those Sunday afternoons  
and showed us  
the Dying Swan  
and the drooling dogs?

*Michael Mott*

## ✧ BOCCOCHAN

This robot was made very well. It was a woman robot. Though it was a human work, it appeared to be the most beautiful of women. It took on all the elements of beauty and became perfectly attractive; however, it looked a little bit prudish, but after all that, too, was an element of beauty.

Nobody could have planned to make such a robot except him: the mercenary bar owner. Ultimately, it proved a stupid matter—making her so like a human—as you shall see. Reasonably, someone with that kind of money could make more efficient machines that looked like machines, or find and train a lot of unemployed humans willing to do the job.

He told himself that he had just made Boccochan as a hobby. The cheapskate would not confess he made her to rake in more cash. He didn't drink. For that master of the bar liquor was not for his pleasure: he took his pleasure from commerce—the commerce of preying on drunkards, finding other pleasures in spending their booze money when he was off duty.

Boccochan's skin was like silk. Her motions were simple and natural enough so that nobody could tell the difference between the real and the robot. At a glance, in fact, she had to be more beautiful than the real.

Admittedly, Boccochan's mind was close to vacancy. The master of the bar didn't pay nearly enough attention to its construction. Really, he reasoned, all that she needed to do to fulfill his goals was make easy, simple conversation and drink. He made her so that the drinks she took in went from her mouth to her throat, finally into her hollow legs and hips. And when he finished his creation he set her at the bar—at the counter (for he feared she might be discovered to be a machine if he risked putting her at a table with several companions at once).

When the customers saw this stunning new face they always tried to talk with her. She could tell them her name and general age and give them general feedback to their other questions. Even so, what with bar noise and music, nobody realized she was a robot.

"What's your name?"

"Boccochan."

"How old are you?"

"I'm still young."

"I know. But HOW old?"

"I'm still young."

Most of the customers of this bar were elegant and at least superficially polite, so nobody asked her any more.

"Pretty dress you wear."

"Pretty dress I wear."

"What do you like to drink?"

"What do I like to drink?"

"Do you like gin fizz?"

"I like gin fizz."

Of course, Boccochan could drink endlessly and never get drunk. So there she sat and sat: beautiful, young and prudish. When customers kept peppering her with questions, sometimes she was deemed cold and aloof. Her reputation was enhanced by this and her reputation spread about town. Boccochan was talked about and she drank and drank, showing no ill effect. Customers talked with Boccochan and they drank and drank.

"Who do you like best among the customers?"

"Who do I like best among the customers?"

"Do you love me?"

"I love you."

"Let's go to see a movie next week."

"Let's go to see a movie next week!"

"When's convenient for you?"

" . . . . . "

When she couldn't answer a signal, the master was warned, and he would dash in.

"Excuse me, sir. Don't tease her."

Once he spoke that way the customers would usually stop questioning her and

stop, as a rule, with sour, embarrassed smiles. But they kept drinking and buying her drinks.

The master sometimes sat down on his heels, behind the bar, and collected liquor from the plastic tubes of her legs. And sometimes he would re-sell it to the bar customers as the "house special." Nobody ever complained.

Many would say, "Regardless of her youth, that girl is full and firm. She's modest, too; never reveals her accomplishments. And she drinks but she doesn't get drowned in her liquor."

So her popularity rose and drew in more customers day by day.

There was one young man who stood out among her customers. He began to love her and continued to come to see Boccochan nightly. Though she was limited in her encouragement, he imagined that her fondness was growing and his heart leaned more intensely toward her.

He ran up more and more bar bills and couldn't pay up. He got caught by his father filching from family funds at home. The old man was gruff and scolded him severely: "You must not go there again! Here's money. Pay what you owe and stay away from that bar from now on."

That young man went to the bar to pay up. He was wretched. He let Boccochan drink and drink and he finally said: "I can't come again."

"You can't come again."

"Are you sad?"

"I'm sad."

"Aren't you kidding?"

"I'm kidding."

"You are the coldest woman in the world."

"I'm the coldest woman in the world."

"Do you want to be killed?"

"I want to be killed."

He took two capsules of lethal drugs out of his pocket and put them in her glass when her head was turned. He had imagined a double suicide, but he was now so

furious that he just wanted to see Boccochan dead. He tapped her on the shoulder and pushed the drink in front of Boccochan.

"Have another drink."

"I'll have another drink."

As he stared at her, Boccochan drank it all. Then he said, "Die as you like." And he paid the master his money and dashed out of the bar, hearing at his back, "I'll die as I like."

When the young man had fled, the master smirked and drained Boccochan's legs dry, and as it was late, he shouted out, "Drink up till you're satisfied. Free house specials for everybody tonight." Of course he had no idea what the customers were really getting.

"Wow!"

"Good!"

"Great!"

Customers and barmaids toasted each other over and over. On this night even the tea-totaling skinflint master broke down and knocked back a few.

On this particular night, the lights of the bar blazed on long past closing time. The radio continued music and talk. Nobody new came in since it was past closing time. Gradually all voices ceased completely. Eventually the radio said "Good night," and went silent.

Only Boccochan whispered "Good night." And she was waiting for the next question with her nose in the air.

*Fujiko Nakatani*

## ☯ Eggs

White. Ovoid.

Light in the hand, yet heavy with promise.

They press in my palm with grave insistence.

My fingers know their fragility, sense the potency

Held in the shell, the fine-walled asylum, shadowed sanctuary,

The opaque dance of conception veiled in a particulate cloud.

China white. Or mottled brown. Warm in the nest but cool in my hand

As I close the refrigerator door, place the skillet on the stove,

Add a nut of butter, taste of salt and pepper, to the pan.

I take my morning eggs overeas, a buttery film

Holding the embryonic form. With the first thrust of the fork,

The white albumen is streaked with curls of yolk, then swirls

Across the open space of the plate like a great nebula,

Like the lacy whirl of the Milky Way, or the froth of a dying wave,

Spreading across the imbibing sand as shore birds step carefully in the wash,

Eyes bright on the small sand crabs.

*Paul R. Neumann*



## ✿ Fishing With My Father

Such a glow on the lake with dark descending,  
Gold on the granite slopes and growing shadows,  
Not a whisper of wind in the trees to stir the water.  
The twilight, my father felt, was best for fishing,  
That mysterious margin between day and night,  
So we'd stand on the dock together, trout rising  
Lazily through the lush green surface of the lake,  
Casting our lines, reeling in, careful with words.  
It took me years and children to know what we sought  
In that quiet time, what we fished for in the silence.  
I was young and wanted only the rapture of the strike,  
The caught trout arching its back on the dock. But into  
That dark pool my father threw his lure again and again,  
Almost always disappointed, until there was no light.

*Paul R. Neumann*

✿ Of Whales and Marriage on a Foggy Day at  
Point Sur

The whales migrate through the sunless ocean,  
Moving in pods but solitary, steering their course safe  
Through the depths by instinct, an occasional sound  
Going out from one through the fathomless sea to another,  
The song from Scammon's Lagoon echoing through  
The vast and lonely waters then berthing like a heartbeat  
In leviathan deep in the chasm of the Monterey Canyon.  
A delicate resonance, a slender chord, that still haunts me.

In 1995, remember, we stood at the side of our son's bed,  
His head in bandages, the doctors silent. My eyes met yours  
Somewhere in the quiet depths of that room. How close we  
Came to the edge of ruin, but something passed between us,  
Some great form nosing through that sea of cloudy fear,  
Finning through the murky water. When we blinked, then  
Looked away, motes of dust swirled in the damp air, golden  
In the sunlight. Our son awoke and asked for ice cream.

*Paul R. Neumann*

## ✿ DRAWING A HEARTBEAT

Listening to this music, letting it bleed into the room  
The words we cannot say  
Forgetting the clock, and allowing the falling light to choreograph  
the movement of time  
We are drawing a heartbeat  
Complicated and unnerving  
Lines so fine and delicate we fumble with our hands  
Crude instruments compared to the softness of your cheek  
It is something that keeps us here  
That stops us as if our death is upon us  
They swirl above and around us, these ghosts  
Voices that harmonize with what we were  
Nudging us to become what we thought would be  
The Gods have urged us to dance on this stage  
Enter Truth affecting our places  
No understudy to fill in the silence  
Or to feel this dull ache that tugs at every string  
Of our being  
We are left with everything  
Except nothing.

*Elizabeth Nielsen*

✿ NO PERFECT SILENCE

Once buried in the grooves of our minds  
were words, now left hanging from the rafters  
Suspended empty weights.

No clocks, only a canvas of air to draw upon  
White noise fades echoes of the past into  
a backdrop for this pose

We wait for the inevitable interruption  
that will break our motionless limbs  
from movement of discovery, that in this state  
The drumming and thumping of our hearts  
are the absolute moments of seeking  
Perfect silence.

*Elizabeth Nielsen*

## ☿ Caught in a Trap: *The Dead* Redux

"(T)he solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling."

—James Joyce, *The Dead*

There were gullywashers in Memphis,  
and upstairs at Graceland, in the master  
bedroom, facing the Meditation  
Garden as if listening to a distant music,  
Lisa Marie finally turns and says to me,  
"Sweetie, if you can't get on board with Scientology,  
this thing between  
us is through."

Later, lying in the king sized  
bed, yin-yang, head to toe, I remind  
her it wasn't what we thought that brought  
us together in that Nascar bar. She had liked  
me and my hair like her daddy's,  
the front with a curl, back closely shorn,  
that I played Thin Lizzy's *Rosalie*  
on the jukebox, another danger boy in a different form.

I protest that I don't understand volcanoes, hydrogen bombs or Xenu.  
She insists, "Darlin', I believe in you—  
just trust me until all the facts are in."  
I say, "Baby, I am sleepin' with a straight girl  
once married to Michael Jackson.  
There's little left but trust in this world."  
She curls into me, head on my breast,  
ruffles the short hairs of my neck,

and to the rhythm of a river shuffling off the eaves,  
sings, "She knows music, I know music too you see."  
I whisper to her a warning "Honey, when it rains  
this hard, can the eternal flame go out?  
Should you go downstairs, take care  
of business, turn off the gas?  
It's Elvis week—all those floral tributes  
would go up in a flash."  
For that night, while gently lifting the Mississippi, and  
quietly uniting the quick and the dead, rain  
was general all over Memphis.

*Tanya Olson*

## ☯ The Colonization of Cool: American Youth Culture Invades China

*"One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away."*

—Edward W. Said

"Can I touch your nose," asked Linda. The other ten or so nineteen-year-old girls who had been vying for my attention and a good spot at my dining room table giggled shyly. "Really, I want to touch your nose. You have a very tall nose." It was my first night at Xiantao Professional College in central China and my soon-to-be students were too excited to wait for classes to begin before meeting me, their new American English teacher.

Linda, I would soon find out, was the most popular girl in class, the prettiest, smartest, coolest, and the one who would speak for the rest. The boys were afraid of her and all the girls wanted to be her friend. She was bold, and she spoke her mind and the minds of her classmates as well. "We think you are beautiful." Giggles. "Westerners have big, beautiful noses and big eyes and long—what do you call this?"

"Eyelashes," I said.

"You have a very long eyelashes," she said in an innocent Little Red Riding Hood sort of way. We wish our eyelashes be like you."

"And your nose is very—" The stifled giggles became laughter, "so very much big." She reached over and pressed down on the bridge of my nose."

"Ow."

"I'm sorry, I gave you pain."

"It's OK."

"Our noses are different, look." She flattened her nose with her index finger to the delight of her friends. "We all wish our noses be like you."

I didn't know how to respond. Linda was far more beautiful than I could ever imagine myself, but the mere fact that I had a European nose and fairly light skin

was undeniably attractive to her and her friends. I would soon come to realize that to these girls, most of whom had never left central China, *anything* Western was "cool," something I never expected to come from the center of what I thought to be the most esoteric nation on the planet.

The People's Republic of China. Population: 1.3 billion people. Government: Communist Republic. Staple Food: rice. That's pretty much what most Americans know about China. China's leave-us-the-hell-alone attitude has fascinated and offended many a nation. Although tourists and expatriates living in China have fewer restrictions than they did in the past, Chinese culture and daily life are still shrouded with a silkscreen of mystery and intrigue. Many Westerners who do travel to the Middle Kingdom do so on organized tours. China has an agency that deals specifically with foreign travelers, putting them in hotels and on buses for foreigners, and suggesting restaurants with an eerie foreign-only clientele. In fact, many hotels in China are "Chinese only," and will not make an exception even to those armed with foreign expert cards, residency permits, and the Mandarin language. When restrictions on foreigners are compounded by restrictions on Chinese, it not only becomes more difficult to understand Chinese culture, but it makes Western culture all the more unpenetratable by the Chinese.

Just as we see "The East" through our big, Western eyes, the Chinese see the West through the lenses of a nation whose idea of the West is based on government-run television, government-printed textbooks and novels, and bootleg Hollywood movies and porn. They don't know us anymore than we know them. We have yet to sit down face-to-face and understand the culture of the other. Their idea of the West is a big, bad conglomerate of nations led by the United States; it is an overfed and oversexed Judeo-Christian bankroll; it is a vague apparition, and outside of the big cities like Schenzen and Shanghai, exists like modern-day folklore. They have created an image of the West as it exists in pop culture, in popular movies and popular music; and this image has become their truth.

Chinese people are full of misconceptions about American daily life, as we are



about their lives. I am not claiming all billion-plus Chinese people have the exact same notions about American life, but I can vouch that many of them think we drink warm milk every day for breakfast, spend money like water, eat five or six big meals a day, and my personal favorite: sleep with friends of the opposite sex just because there's nothing good on TV. I can't fault them for this way of thinking. When I first came to China, I searched for the image of the Middle Kingdom I had long ago created by watching films and CNN, and when I did find something matching that image, be it a peasant with a straw hat, or a blind fortune teller perched on a small three-legged stool, I would take a picture and send it home as if to say, "Mom, Dad, look, I'm in China." When I visited Linda in her hometown, she couldn't understand why I wanted to take photos of noodles hanging out to dry on tree branches or of old people playing cards. She viewed such things with disgust; she did not want Americans to see this side of China, the poor and primitive methods of noodle making and the silly games of the old folk. But this was what I thought China was, and what I had come to China to see and experience.

Linda and her classmates had another image of China in mind; they essentially wanted to import American life, the life they believed Americans led, a life of never-ending pocket money, of never having to do one's own housecleaning, and of tall buildings lining the skyline of even the smallest of towns. This was their image, and surely enough if they did come to America, they would search for these images and write about them in letters home.

China's youth is now confronting the xenophobia of the past and rebelling against it. They are learning English, dancing in discos, singing American pop songs, and touching the noses of actual Americans. The Communist Party can even be given credit for facilitating this drastic social change. In just three generations, women have gone from hobbling around on painful, bound feet, uneducated and undervalued, to sitting in my classroom, learning English with hopes of becoming English teachers themselves. They are smoking cigarettes in discos, and wearing tight-fitted T-shirts over their stuffed bras. And as economic restrictions loosen, and with their entry into the WTO, Chinese people believe more foreign influences

are bound to change their daily lives.

You know what the coolest place is to take a girl on the first date in a small Chinese city? A fast-food hamburger joint. Any McDonald's imitation would do (McDonald's is only in the bigger cities); and one hamburger combo costs more than would normally feed three people in a fairly decent Chinese restaurant. But it's cool, as cool as the disco, as cool as wearing a Christian cross or rosary beads around one's neck, as cool as blue jeans or imitation Nike sneakers. They don't have to understand what rosary beads mean any more than we have to know what feng shui is. Think about this: Rosary beads are cool among Chinese youths, not Americans; and feng shui is trendy among American twenty-somethings, and not Chinese, as such traditions are for old people. Trends are trends and they are imported, adapted, and reinvented to suit the culture. So while taking your date to McDonald's is the most uncool thing a young American could do, the Chinese have turned it into an expensive and romantic date-spot. You can import the pop, but its use will inevitably be altered.

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*"There are two winds in the world today, the East Wind and the West Wind.  
There is a Chinese saying, "Either the East Wind prevails over  
the West Wind or the West Wind prevails over the East Wind."*

—Mao ZeDong

The students today are comparatively obedient when it comes to the wishes of their government and their parents. I had many students who wanted to be businesswomen but were told by their fathers that they had to be teachers. They would never go against the wishes of their elders. As an oral exercise, I asked my students what they would change if they could change anything in the world. So many replied, "my destiny," I lost count. Their fate, be it their careers, marriages, number of children they'll conceive, or in which apartment they'll spend the rest of their lives, is indeed predetermined, in part, by the government and in part by their families. Yet, they have the same restless spirit of the previous generations,

except the changing face of China has also directly influenced their outlet for rebellion.

With the opening of Chinese business and the financial benefits of the One-Child Policy, the upcoming generation of twenty-somethings is facing a future glittering with economic opportunity. Such hope leaves no need for idol worship, as money and advancement have become religion enough. And with so many households stocked with rice and televisions, as the citizens of Rome had their bread and circuses, there is also no need for risky demonstrations. A friend of mine is a student at the esteemed Tsinghua University in Beijing. He is ranked the best in his major and is planning on seeking a PhD at Princeton. Coming from a poor village, to Tsinghua, to maybe the USA, is not an easy feat. If one doesn't receive scholarship money, his/her family would have to pay for the child's schooling from elementary school on. Loans from family members or communities are more common than loans from the government, but loan or not, a poor boy studying at Tsinghua exemplifies the direct relationship between the opening of opportunities for the poor central Chinese and the quelling of political uprising among the intellectuals. He would be the first from his village to climb the academic and social ladder; would he give that up to demonstrate as Beijing's students did in 1989? Never. As they plunge into the depths of middle class, their restlessness is expressed as it is with many others living in the ranks of leisure culture. Donning American Coolness is the new Chinese rebellion.

A slight highlight of red or yellow in an otherwise jet-black head of hair, an overpriced Nescafé in a pseudo-coffee shop, a strategically placed rip in the knee of a new pair of jeans, are almost tragically cool. I say tragic because as the Cultural Revolution generation rampaged against anything old and feudal, and the Tiananamen generation thought an age-old ideology could be changed overnight just for the wanting, this current generation, the Cool generation, is also not looking back. The past is old and so it is uncool. They are, for seemingly filially pious peoples, quite ageist. After I left Xiantao and asked my students about their new foreign English teacher, they would all inevitably answer as such,

"She's not as good as you because she's old. She has old ideas. We don't care about what old people say." She was only in her forties and more experienced than I was, but what they wanted was not just an English teacher; they wanted a precise idea of how to be a Western youth, what to say and what to do to act more American.

That's what I think I was paid to help them achieve just as much as to improve their level of English comprehension. There is not only an academic advantage to having a foreign English teacher, but also a social status advantage as well. Even when my more apathetic students who didn't do homework and were on the brink of failing walked past me in a shopping center, they would always say "hello," or whatever they knew how to say to impress their friends.

This Cool generation really has me worried. They are a generation who can get by with saying, "Oh, I could go into business and travel the world, but my father won't let me take the chance." They don't really know how to take responsibility for their actions. At Xiantao Professional College, like other schools in China, the students have mandatory study sessions when they do not have scheduled classes. Even if they are finished with their work, they must go to the study sessions, as the class teacher will be there to check on attendance. They subsequently do not develop time-management skills. In fact, they are even told when to close their eyes at night and when to open them in the morning. The circuit breakers in the dorms are switched off promptly at 10 PM and a loudspeaker blasts music at 6:15 AM, signaling the start of the day. Students who miss the curfew are locked out of their dorms and so the curfew is taken seriously and rarely ignored. When I asked a teacher why the lights were switched off at 10:00, she replied, "If the lights weren't turned out, how would the students know when to go to sleep?"

Upon waking, the students all head to the front of the school for morning exercises, then flock to the dining hall for breakfast before going to the classrooms. They must get up and participate in this ritual regardless of whether or not they have an actual class during the first period. There is no sense of responsibility, but even more severe, there is no sense of control over one's life; this is what

makes going to the disco so wild, so cool, so rebellious.

Chinese students are supposed to focus their energy on one thing and one thing only: their studies. The colleges that I worked at in central and western China do not have organized extracurricular activities like the chess club, environmental club, art club, student newspaper, etc. They do not have student resident assistants, or student government committees that make any real pertinent decisions. What's more, many schools have a "no dating" policy. If the policy is not an officially written rule, it is strongly encouraged. Many of my students asked me if I thought it was possible to be a student and still go out on dates. Out of my 300-plus undergraduate students, only a handful of them have ever held part-time jobs. An argument could be made than in a developing country with such a high population, jobs are scarce, but the main reason why they do not have jobs is that parents and teachers fear it will take away from the students' studies.

Sex, in the absence of dating, is pretty much nonexistent. Still, there are some rebellious students who find the time and place to get it on. But if premarital sex is still taboo, student sex is a crime that could lead to expulsion. A female student who has become pregnant, regardless of whether she's had an abortion, and regardless of whether or not she was raped, is immediately expelled. (I've never heard of a male student getting expelled for engaging in sexual activities, just young women.) Drugs and alcohol are not part of campus life. I don't want to make a judgment call on whether or not binge drinking and marijuana smoking are good for students, but in China the lack of opportunities for experimentation and responsibility leaves college graduates socially immature and incapable of handling social situations where alcohol is present. This is serious because Chinese business culture and competitive drinking go hand-in-hand. A recent graduate pressured into binge drinking at a business dinner is not a pretty sight.

Imagine graduating from college, never having made a decision in regards to your life, be it by choosing your major or your elective classes, never having had a job, a girlfriend/boyfriend, or gotten drunk at least once. Imagine going for a

post-collegiate job interview with no work experience on your resume. Imagine being told when to get up every morning and one day finding yourself without the communal morning alarm. Imagine landing that first job and living in your work unit, with your colleagues in the apartment below you and your boss two stories up. It is a different world, with a different social system. How could American culture successfully be imported into such a system without drastically altering it?

Let's take a look at what they are importing. Are they importing American free thought and individualist spirit? Not at all. We may associate that with good old-fashioned James Dean American Cool, but Chinese people don't. They are importing pop culture, that is bop your head in sync with the bubblegum tune, cheesy love song, hokey-pokey kind of stuff. As this is the case, China's future remains as depressingly closed as its xenophobic past. Sure, there now is, and will continue to be, more money to be made, more leisure time to be had, and more bowls of rice to be ingested, but without an independent mind, rebellious or not, Western clothes or not, China's cultural closet will remain closed not only to the rest of the world, but to Chinese people as well. With the government's strong reigns on the media and the Internet (I could not access many sites, including Amnesty International and other human rights pages, from China), China's theoretical Great Wall of cultural and international divide is still very much in place. The Chinese have mastered the use of the television to simultaneously entertain and control the masses and so although American culture has invaded the Middle Kingdom, China is importing not our culture, but rather the Chinese perception of it as it is subject to the government's censorship.

Their dependency on group existence, that is families sleeping in the same bedroom, friends going to the toilet side-by-side, the fear of eating alone, etc., exacerbates the dependency on the government as well as on general acceptance. To be unpopular in China is to be alone and to be lonely in China is unbearable. To paraphrase a Chinese proverb: "One Chinese person abroad is miserable; two can survive alright; ten Chinese abroad will be happy." Chinese

people exist as a group. Hence Chinatowns. Hence town associations, work units; hence communism. Although China doesn't have a direct translation for "private," they do have a reputation for being the most private nation around. And now here they are, trying to import American pop culture. At first I thought this could change everything; as they came in contact with more and more American ideas, China could find itself in the midst of another revolution. But they'll never be able to import American individuality into a culture dependent on being part of the masses.

I judged a college English essay competition in Xin Jiang Province on the subject of "pollution." The candidates all stated the obvious environmental problems existing in China, but when I asked each one what they could do to help reduce pollution, they all replied that it was the government's responsibility. During a meal with other teachers and school officials after the competition, I suggested we spearhead a campus-wide environmental awareness program and offered to help get it underway. I was told it would "not be possible." Then I realized why the students did not think they could do anything about the problem: because they really couldn't. They look to their government to control their lives because, at this point in time, they see no other way. So they are taking what they can from the other side of the wall, a can of Coca-Cola and a Britney Spears CD, but no real change is taking place. The government still controls TV, still keeps tabs on its foreign experts, and still controls the printing of textbooks from primary school through university.

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*When China wakes, she will shake the world.*

—Napoleon Bonaparte

Chinese students seem to think a number of things will awaken China and consequently rock the rest of the globe, all of which are directly related to life outside their wall. They think the entry into the WTO will make all Chinese peo-

ple richer. And it may indeed; but they don't question the power that strong, Western countries have over developing ones in the WTO. They think winning the 2008 Olympic bid will make other countries privy to the power and greatness that only China sees itself as having. And it just may, but they don't question the beautification of Beijing at the expense of ignoring poverty areas. Chinese people have a sense of nationalism that I've never seen in any other country's peoples, and it clouds their view of themselves. Such a criticism may sound ironic coming from an American; I don't mean to come across as *America rocks; it's the coolest country in this here democracy-starved world*. But Americans do not base their national pride on what happened thousands of years ago, nor do they base it on what will happen far into the future. There is, after all, a fine line between nationalist spirit and blind following; and Chinese people, by default, tend to lean toward the latter.

When we look at China's present situation, it is just as easy for Americans to see a friend as they are to see a foe. I, however, fear China. I fear it because of its size, its population, its unquestionable nationalism, and its herd mentality. Since the communist "liberation" of China, young people in particular have been stuffed with enough propaganda to feed an army. And now the new propaganda is so masterfully and aesthetically arranged on Western platters: it is Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, the Backstreet Boys, discotheques, Marlboro cigarettes, *Titanic*, and various cheesy American love ballads. The young people think they are Americanized, global, cosmopolitan, but they are the same as their Red Guard parents before them: brainwashed, immature, easily manipulated, herded, and ignorant of the world around them. My fear is that China could very well one day shake the world, but be it clothed in red armbands or American miniskirts, Chinese youth wardrobe is strictly external and Chinese people have a long way to go before they can truly *awaken*.

Joyce Orobello



From nowhere, a star overflows  
pouring its light across your lips  
and some old love song

—who can remember every word  
—even the sun by evening  
leaves empty: you learn to forget

so the melody will flicker off  
fall apart in your mouth  
—a few lines, that's it!

*What a shame, such a voice*  
but you can't remember  
complain the lamps are arranged

too far apart, too dim  
then move room to room  
with the words that are left

are exhausted, sweating and glowing  
—the roof and the moon are both flying  
filled with a huge chorus

and the clear light across the world  
—you forget—without looking  
a song half lost, half through the rafters.

*Simon Perchik*



As if sunlight alone spins the Earth  
—who doesn't dread the overcast, clouds  
damage the brain—you need more and more lamps  
—pills help, at least for awhile they spark

are fireballs but your tongue  
freezes on its long dive into seawater  
—you can't talk, even your lips  
slow down, covered with frost

and though you push your chair closer  
the ice, so gently, pushes back  
till there's no table you can hold in place

—just this frail bulb dragging its light  
and from the sky, wherever it's going.

You will stay—who hasn't made the offer  
waits where the sun took root  
and in the dark your bones growing whiter

—they never were content in the daytime  
are stronger at night, lifting your jaw  
—even your arms follow upward  
while you wait for the slow worry  
sending you back and the heaviness.

*Simon Perchik*

## ☿ IMAGINARY TRAINS

I spent two days missing trains  
and now understand servizio periodico;  
the words represented by a small squiggly line  
next to each of my trains on the schedule.

It took sixteen hours  
to reach the town of green shutters  
where I left the station,  
passed the crumbling Savoia Hotel  
and came to the waterside promenade.

Sirens sunned themselves on the rocks  
beside the walls of the castle.  
I was warmed  
by fall sunshine.

Two days have bleached me  
white of concern  
for all but gelato  
and coffee ground finely  
so that it collects in dark slurry  
at the bottom of my cup.

Without checking  
I know the imaginary trains  
continue to run.  
I no longer care  
that they do not stop for me.

I do not care that they stop

only for  
imaginary riders who know  
where and how to catch them.

I care only for gelato and coffee,  
sirens and sunshine.

*Matthew Phelps*

☞ Refuge

The kerosene lanterns flicker  
bouncing yellow light off white railings.  
We read to each other  
my parents and I.  
We have grown weary of war,  
*freedom poodles and freedom fries.*

On this porch, with each other,  
there is refuge from what is  
beyond the green hedge  
that we must trim less,  
must let grow taller  
each year.

*Matthew Phelps*

## ☯ Stealing

She says

I could never steal from you—  
then robs me of my heart  
and my afternoon.

To write about her is to be near to her.

She came drunk to me once—  
stayed in my bed  
criticized it in the morning  
left without even a kiss.

I touched her neck.  
She told me I touched her  
like a poet.

I want to write her name in ink.  
I want to write her name into this book  
and onto my wall.

I want to speak her name to strangers,  
to say it aloud for the pleasure of its speaking—  
to feel the way the tongue must move to make its sound.

*Matthew Phelps*

## ☼ Three Fragments

1 Yet from my tomb such flame of love arise  
that whoso passes shall be warmed thereby;  
let stray cats curl there  
where no tomb stone is  
and girls' eyes sparkle at the unmarked spot  
let rancours die  
and a slow drowse of peace pervade who passes.

2 Night rain and a Biddle sky  
"That somewhat obstinate expression  
not devoid of amusement  
on John Adams' face in his frontispiece  
and that this might have to do with "funding"  
funding, as in the jargon of that epoch.

"H-how old is it?  
How high is it—eh?  
Wu-what makes it a wonder?"  
La Torre di Pisa  
in the dim mind of the sick-call  
The "dark forest" (Turgenev's) la selva . . .

or a sky as of feldspar in autumn  
when the sun goes to his rest

and to you Father Ascreus commen—  
about the time of my birthday  
2 friends, new friends:

3           this lady-bug not red brown but yellow  
black spotted who draws in her head like a turtle  
and this wasp yellow-banded  
          aux yeux fleur-de-tête  
in extacy over my jam-spread  
          exuberant as a puppy-dog  
and to Γεῖα the munificent my thanks for 2 most delicate mushrooms

*Ezra Pound*



## ☞ THE PIER

Beach sand is white magic at ten,  
and you're playful.  
    dodge gulls,  
    fight waves,  
chase after dogs,  
Get burned and mama puts salve on.

And there's that big thing,  
Hundreds of lines hangin' down.  
Daddy said it ain't for little boys,  
But I ain't scared  
Cos it makes water sing  
When it beats those poles around,  
Those poles are green and tall, bob like toys  
and nobody cares . . .

. . . That they might fall right off.  
I swear it looks like it's dancin' sometimes.  
Daddy said it was a big fishin' pier,  
Don't know but I been on it.  
I snuck there; they was off,  
With friends I guess; I knew it was my time,  
If it was ever going to get here.  
Walked clean to the end of it.

And when I closed my eyes,  
I could see all the way to Paris, France  
(That's a place someone said was in the war.)  
Don't know 'bout wars, but it was there.  
Boys, girls, and lullabies,

All the people were just a-danc-in'  
Like Friday nights at Charley's run down store.  
Closed my eyes tight, and I was there.

It was pretty to see,  
The Eiffel Tower, lots of pretty sights.  
I laughed so hard I really got dizzy;  
That is when I opened my eyes.  
That

Is when,  
    I knew,  
        I was not,  
        a lit-  
tle boy.  
But a man  
    climb-  
        ing  
        a rail.

and nobody cares . . .  
    . . . that they might fall right off.  
I swear it looks like it's dancin' sometimes.

*Bobby G. Price*

## ☞ Meaning and the Momentous

If I were to ask you for a synonym for the word *momentous*, you'd probably suggest *important*. What I want to try to show in this paper, however, is that *important* doesn't quite capture what it means to call action momentous. Something gets lost. That's because we usually use *important* to describe events in general rather than actions in particular. True, we sometimes call events momentous—earthquakes, wars, epidemics and the like—but when we call acts momentous we mean more than that they are important, or, perhaps, better; we mean that they are important in a special way. You may think I'm picking nits here (as I confess philosophers tend to), but I don't think I am. Something very distinctive about the significance of human action gets washed out when we neglect the difference I want to highlight. So, if you will, join me for a few pages in paying close attention to the distinctive way action increases in the registry of its moment, how it becomes "more momentous" or of greater moment, for the person who characterizes it.

To quantify *moment*, we first need to note the logical distinction between the moment of an action and the moment of an event. It is the former we are concerned with, for though both designations are temporal specifications, they play according to different temporal logics in our discourse. References to the moment of an event are references to a point in time, an instant *at* which something happened—the car ran out of gas just before sunset, the clock struck ten five and a half minutes late. When we refer to the moment of someone's action we typically refer to a span of time encompassing a succession of movements. We characterize what is or was *being accomplished* over that span, even during times when there was no apparent movement taking place. (Fran paid off her mortgage in 20 years. Number 5 is driving down court too slowly.)

I'm going to call this the character logic as opposed to the event logic of time. For character logic, an action is real from its inception to its completion, real during the entire span of its duration, that duration counting as the moment in which it is or was being realized.

My contention in this paper is that because almost any action we characterize

comprehends a range of movements, we can gauge its relative moment by factoring together all the moments of the moves that realize it. *Momentous*, as I shall describe it, refers to the combined moments our characterization of the action covers.

You may suspect that I'm aiming for more precision than my subject calls for, that calling an act momentous is simply an old-fashioned way of saying that it has important consequences. But I notice that when we reduce moment to importance we unnecessarily beg the question about what makes an act important. Some actions, after all, register as important *in* their doing, even *before* we know their consequences. What I hope to show is that an act's relative importance is better understood as a logical function of its measurable moment, not the other way around. We gauge the moment of an act temporally and measure its importance thereby.

There are at least three ways one can multiply the moves realizing his accomplishment and enhance thereby the moment of what he does: by framing its intentional significance in some more comprehensive context, by acting with greater resolve, and by acting interactively.

Consider these in turn.

First, accomplishments of longer duration *tend* to be realized by more movements. A one-day car trip takes less movement on the part of the driver than a two-day trip. So the two-day trip (other things being equal) would register as a more momentous undertaking. But—and this is important—we would be mistaken to look only at duration as the measure of the moment of an accomplishment. Though it took Fran 20 years to fill a penny jar, the same 20 years it took her to pay off her mortgage, the accomplishments don't register as equally momentous. Consider though that the number of moves during those 20 years do bear on our sense of the relative moment of the two accomplishments.

To see this clearly we need to be clear about what counts as the moves of any act we characterize. A simple axiom of character logic should keep us on track here, I think. Let me formalize it this way: when we ascribe action to any agent,

the range of moves we recognize as part of that action are *all and only* the moves determined as to character by the character of the action we ascribe. So, for example, my action of fixing breakfast includes such moves as setting the water to boil, grinding the coffee beans, and putting the bagel in the toaster oven. But it doesn't include taking a shower or dressing, moves that, though they came between putting water on the stove and grinding the coffee beans, did not realize *fixing breakfast*. The moves that realize *fixing breakfast* are, if you will, a set or range of moves framed by their duration but not necessarily inclusive of all the moves their agent did during that time.

If we keep this in mind, it becomes clear why one of Fran's 20-year projects was more momentous than the other. She *filled the penny jar* over twenty years only by making occasional tossing moves when she happened to be exploring her coin purse in the vicinity of the jar, presumably one move per penny. We could, I suppose, even try to quantify the relative momentousness of filling the penny jar by multiplying the number of pennies by the average length of time it took to toss each. Paying off the mortgage took Fran a great many more moves. There was of course her monthly ritual of writing a check and mailing it to the bank. But simple movements like that don't begin to tell the story of how she paid it off. She did so by driving the kind of car she drove, by eating in cheap restaurants, and by all the other modifications she made to meet that long-term financial obligation.

Notice why we recognize these diverse elements of her intentional life as moves in *paying off the mortgage* whereas we didn't see fit to include showering and dressing in *fixing breakfast*. We recognize that the specific character of her car ownership and the specific character of her restaurant patronage *were determined* in their character by *paying off the mortgage*. Showering and dressing, we said, were in no discernable way determined as to character by the character of "*fixing breakfast*."

Ordinary language reflects this greater density of agency in some accomplishments than others by saying things like *Fran was more invested in paying off the mortgage*, or *Fran was more given to it*. What I am suggesting is that being

more given or invested in the one accomplishment lends it greater moment. We regard such a multiplication of movements in one as a signal of its greater moment for Fran, and for anyone who perceives something of the investment it took for Fran to pay it off. This brings us to the topic of Fran's *resolve*, which is another way to speak about the difference in density of movement between the two accomplishments. But before I do that, I want to point out that though duration itself does not provide the measure of moment, framing an accomplishment with a characterization that sets it in a more comprehensive accomplishment of greater duration does tend to multiply the moment of the action we characterize. A naked Gaul spying Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon might characterize his action as just that, crossing the Rubicon. An informed Roman citizen witnessing the same crossing might recognize it as challenging the Senate, a challenge he knew didn't end when the pack train made it to the south bank. But the citizen's characterization also determines greater moment insofar as there is a broader range of Caesar's intentional life caught up in his challenge to the Senate. It multiplies the greater duration by the greater density of movement Caesar's action has by virtue of its resolve, by virtue of how much of Caesar's intentional life was being brought to bear in that task of greater duration.

For one person to fathom another's resolve he has to imagine his way into the other's practical imagination, at least a little bit. Being resolved means shaping elements of one's life to accommodate what one is resolved upon, and seeing how some of these accommodations are or were being determined is seeing the action as resolute. So, for example, Fran increased her resolve to pay off the mortgage by making certain adjustments, and we appreciated her resolve by being aware of some of them.

Our perception of moment in the resolve of another rides on two variables, then. One has to do with our acquaintance with the agent's intentional life and the fecundity that acquaintance provides for our sense of the character of his moment of action. Caesar's wife Calpurnia and his close military aides were probably better (i.e., more richly) able to characterize Caesar's resolve than the citizen

could have been, let alone the Gaul. And I think we'd agree that their more intimate awareness of Caesar's character of resolve would import that much greater moment into their awareness of his river crossing.

The other variable has to do with how resolved Caesar actually was. With a reasonable grasp of another's resolve the apparent degree of that resolve also registers as a matter of moment. Some agents are said to appear fully resolved, their entire character of action projected in perfect accord with the course they have determined for themselves. People like this often come across as having great integrity and inner tranquility. We're not aware of static among their intentions, and the outward signs of inner peace leads us to imagine that there isn't any static, that as intentional agents they are whole in the character of what they do. Thus what they do seems to bear greater moment than would a comparable undertaking by some lesser soul.

The third way moment gets multiplied in a characterization of action is when we appreciate the interactive movement of that accomplishment. Obviously, several parties move some accomplishments. What is often less obvious, particularly to social and behavioral scientists', is that an accomplishment moved by two or more people can serve as a paradigm for personal interaction. There are, of course, dysfunctional interchanges between people that don't succeed in finding a shared course, but I would suggest that we usually count these as interactive failures. If we think of interactions as courses of accomplishment moved by more than one person's action, and if it is reasonable to hope that in these shared courses the resolve of each party is typically supported, then I believe it makes sense to treat interactions logically as actions in their own right, accomplishments of a coherent character moved with varying degrees of richness.

I said earlier that the set of moves realizing some accomplishment is the set of all the moves determined as to character by the character of the accomplishment characterized. In other words, a move bears the character of the accomplishment it moves, and the set of moves that share that character constitutes the accomplishment. What this implies (in character logic) is that when you and I interact,

we are both determined as characters of action by our interaction. Even if we aren't particularly resolved in what we're doing or if we can't appreciate one another's resolve, the character of our action for each of us would be the course we jointly advanced, so, by definition, *it would include the character of the other's action.*

As we find exemplified in any well-attended sports arena, this too spikes our sense of the moment. As fans we interact with the team, our gestures amplifying its. We strain toward its goals; we *pull for* the team. And we compete with the opposing team, gesturally fending off its attack. And we interact with one another, in coordinated cheers and jeers, waves, backslapping, and high-fiving. As true fans we can't sit still; sitting still doesn't allow for the movements required to realize the interactive potential of the occasion. Such moments are, accordingly, great!

I have been trying to reinvest "momentous" with its temporal meaning by examining three ways movement can get incorporated into an action we characterize:

- 1) by the duration of the accomplishment as a function of its density of movement,
- 2) by the resolve of its agent insofar as we are able to characterize it, and insofar as it comprehends his intentional life, and
- 3) by the amount of interactive participation realizing it.

I have represented these as three ways the moment of an accomplishment increases in register, and I have tried to show how, when these registries are combined in various degrees and configurations, the sense of their momentousness compounds exponentially. Let me end this paper with a few more illustrative comparisons to drive home this point.

Compare a wedding ceremony as characterized by its officiant, the Rev. Will B. Dunn, with the same ceremony as characterized by the family and close friends of the bride and groom. Will B. Dunn senses great *importance* in the couple's action, but for those who are personally close to the couple and who knew in far



richer ways than he does the resolute character of the moves the couple is making, this richness renders the occasion more momentous for them. They feel a clutch in the throat; Dunn doesn't.

Or consider the difference in how a fan in the stands might appreciate the moment of a basketball championship game, and how that game might be perceived by the teammates who know each other personally and who have invested far more of their lives in the season. The teammates' immersion into one another's resolves compounds the moment this game has for them. They augment the impersonal interactive presence of the crowd with the personal interaction their playing together represents making the occasion exponentially more momentous for them than for their fans. Of course, if it's a tournament game, what they are doing is winning the season (or at least trying to), so the occasion of their victory would be still more momentous.

Or compare an anti-war rally or a civil rights march, profoundly momentous occasions for their participants on interactive grounds and on the grounds of the historic movement they are part of, with a comparable event blessed with a figure of great integrity. Isn't that the function of rally speakers or march leaders, to boost the moment by adding iconic integrity? Their presence also holds out the promise that their interactive moves can be one in accord with personal wholeness, a promise which may call forth greater resolve in the participants. In such ways whole personal presence greatly increases the moment of historically momentous, highly interactive occasions.

One more comparison: the moment of a family meal with the moment of a communion meal as believers experience it. Both compound the interactive moment and resolute moment. In the latter, the moment is further compounded with the sense that their personal interaction moves God's accomplishment, an accomplishment framed by creation and *eschaton*. That leads the communicant to endow the occasion of communion with the highest momentousness, even to celebrate it with forgivable if not justifiable metaphysical exuberance.

Momentousness is genuinely momentary reality in degree. It bespeaks (as its

etymology reflects) the connection of the meaningfulness of an action with its temporal import. It does so as duration, as resolve, as interaction, and even as the communion of resolve. And in the interplay of these dimensions of register, we are sometimes given to realize great moment in what we do.

### Notes

1. One of the debilitating features of the cause-effect language often employed by behavioral scientists is that it treats interactions as a sequence of responses to one another's action. This way of looking at interaction blinds us to the way the character of one another's moves tends to be mutually determined, each party modifying the terms of his own resolve to accommodate the other's.

*Richard C. Prust*

⌘ AT FIFTY

I split up with my husband, made up with my awful  
parents, though both kept one foot in the grave, I fear.  
I can't believe that this is simply menopausal—

what hormone shift could act so utterly all-causal?  
Pathetic fallacy remains a fake, though dear  
when splitting up with husbands. I made an awful

list of reasons I should go. Were they mistakes, colossal  
tricks by ovaries on their last eggs, about to disappear?  
I can't believe that. This isn't simply menopausal.

I'm losing all the weight I gained. No more falafel.  
Both girls survived (well, *just*) their eighteenth year  
but I split. My husband made his bed, as awful

as that sounds (he *never* did the sheets), a brothel  
for all I care. I won't squeeze one more tear,  
I can't. If he believes that this is simply menopausal

he can think (*can* he?) again. Now I grow hostile.  
That's no good. So let me get one last thing clear:  
I split up with my husband when he turned out awful.  
You can't believe that this is simply menopausal.

Margaret Rabb

☿ touching Quetzalcoatl's maker

1. found

perfectly preserved  
hidden from the sun  
in the dirt

built by strong hands  
many years ago

i am afraid to even look at them

2. his breath

is warm against my face  
as warm as his emerald eyes

he stands  
(too powerful to be encased by glass)  
with the feather of an eagle  
in his mouth

its carcass  
on the floor

3. i stare at the serpent god of the past  
and look behind me  
to make sure

no one is watching  
my hand slowly extends  
toward the stone sculpture  
and i brush against the fingers  
of Quetzalcoatl's maker

*Muriel Ramirez*

☼ wind

it is so stifling in the heat of my room  
and i can't even open my window  
because it has been bolted shut  
to keep the wind out

the wind that carries voices  
tastes

smells  
and the excitement  
of new knowledge  
and new people

i have lived here  
for 15 years  
and haven't even felt the breeze  
on the other side of town  
i have lived here  
with hands covering my eyes  
shielding me from sights  
that are not wrong to see

it seems they haven't realized:

the wind always finds its way  
into my room

*Muriel Ramirez*

ॐ

1.

2.

*Muriel Ramirez*

☿ where a Huichol has never been

my mind is put at ease  
by the sound of my footsteps  
on the dry dirt

a red baby cactus  
reminds me of beginnings  
as it grows out of the  
crazing dirt

i realize that i am not alone

the wind is here with me  
it blows through the loud grass  
(sounding like rain)  
blows through my hair  
carrying my sighs with it

the wind has never spoken like this  
and i want to listen to it  
forever

but i can hear them calling me

back home.

*Muriel Ramirez*

☼ Poland

Poland smells  
Of grandfather's fireplace  
And talks  
With the accent of death.  
The streets smile  
Like train conductors  
And are not made for cars.  
We wade against the current  
Of school children  
That enjoy the glimmer  
Of St. Christopher's three golden balls.  
Michael judges us,  
As we sit in a bar,  
In a basement in Krakow,  
Waiting for a train.

*Parrish Ravelli*



## ☞ Prague

At the base of a statue  
I sit  
In a square  
Where Dixieland Prague plays daily.  
But it's night now  
And all I hear  
Is the candle flicker  
Beneath the shelter of my hands.  
Above the statue  
Clouds march in rows  
Across the moon  
Creating a halo.  
The clock strikes one  
And saints roam the streets  
Aimless as nuns.

*Parrish Ravelli*

✿ AND SO THEY DANCED THE MERENGUE . . .

This simple caribbean meeting  
of umbilicuses on the dance floor

—she thought it a whipped up dessert  
as indeed he thought she was

as they danced and danced  
beneath the heat of the turning moon

*Carlos Reyes*

✎ MAIL

*Niente per voi . . .*

—Richard Hugo

Up the Cuesta de la Fuente  
I pass the Arab fountain  
Where villagers draw water  
And a few women wash clothes

Narrow streets and alleys  
The old way up the hill to the gate  
Of the city, up steep cobbles  
In morning heat, for a moment

I step with the church bells  
Of Santa María . . . Then Pause  
Turn, look back at  
A fishing smack far at sea

Do I continue up the *cuesta*  
To the pueblo Or retrace my steps  
Put into the sea a note in a bottle?  
Will it get to Africa? Ireland?

Between my shoulder blades sweat  
I make it to the top and buy my stamp  
A period Spanish sailing vessel  
Will once again send a leaf—my letter—

Onto one of four winds  
Faster but no surer  
Of its destination than the sea

*Carlos Reyes*

## ❧ The Wedding of Yuzaburo

In the days when priests commonly married there was an acolyte named Yuzaburo. He was attached to a large Soto sect temple near Kanazawa. Young and handsome, he was popular with the ladies of the town, and often arrived back at the temple just in time for morning meditations. His temple was worldly and the abbot lenient.

There he would sit at zazen and fall asleep or remember details of the evening before. It was commonly said that Yuzaburo would never become a priest. His fellow acolytes, perhaps envious, said that he had only one religious attribute: the nose of Shoki's elephant.

The reference was to the Chinese guardian-deity; the animal was made up on the spot; and the attribute was Yuzaburo's prick which was rumored large, thick, and long. Actually however, the acolyte had another, real, religious attribute.

He was the deacon, a holy man in these worldly surroundings. He saw that Yuzaburo went out every night in pursuit of this woman or that. He reasoned that the acolyte was driven by some need. He guessed that the need was more than animal. He deduced that the need was spiritual. The boy's large prick he thought in his holy simplicity, argued for an equally large spirit.

There was but one practical solution. Train all of this spiritual need upon a single object, focus faith upon a single target. In short, find Yuzaburo a wife. The abbot, busy with worldly concerns, agreed without considering the matter, and the deacon set about finding the proper spouse for the young, handsome and potential Yuzaburo.

This was no easy matter. The bride could come from none of the young man's prior acquaintances. Thus he could marry no one with the slightest pretense to beauty or to charm since he already knew them. The deacon worried about this for a time and then grasped the simple solution. Since this was so, the bride must come from among the charmless and the ugly.

Thus of an evening when Yuzaburo was tying the strings of his underwear in what he considered a lucky bow, washing his face three times rather than once, as part of a private and compulsive ritual, and repairing to the pleasure houses of the city, the

deacon, by an entirely different route, set out in another part of the city in search for a bride among the ill-favored and the stupid.

While the youth was feverishly pleasuring this woman and that, but rarely himself, the deacon was going from door to door with his singular request. When the acolyte returned to the temple in the early morning, prick smarting, the deacon was just entering his room, feet hurting.

The deacon, reasoning that any reasonable man would soon tire of such surfeit, approached from time to time the young Yuzaburo and spoke of the joys of wedded bliss, talked of consummations both secular and sacred. Yuzaburo, clipping one nail very short, letting another grow very long—a part of the harmless magic by which he lived—listened patiently, nodding in agreement until the meddling deacon should be satisfied and allow him to depart.

Pleased with what he considered assent, finding ample evidence in the acolyte of that most insidious sickness of the soul—boredom—the deacon produced his find, the proper bride for Yuzaburo.

He had found a paragon, brought her to the temple, cleaned her as best he could, and decked her in a bride's kimono. There she stood, a girl with tusk-like teeth, mottled skin, running eyes, falling hair, fingers like talons and a body like a tub. She showed no sign of intelligence and children ran from her in the street. This was to be the bride of the handsome and popular Yuzaburo. The deacon was very pleased with himself and left her, just as she was, to greet her fiancé when he returned.

The acolyte shortly returned. The shock was extreme. At first he thought it was Shoki, returned for his elephant's trunk. Then he saw it was female. Just returned from the white thighs, full breasts, flashing eyes and bright wit of one of the most charming ladies of Kanazawa, Yuzaburo was now presented with a creature in all ways her opposite. His heart shrank and his large prick withered at the sight.

She, however, having finally understood the purpose of meeting, fell instantly, completely, and eternally in love with the handsome, pale, and trembling young man before her. She rolled, tore her hair, wept and gnashed her tusks with happiness.

If Yuzaburo had been the ordinary corrupt young acolyte, the matter would

have ended there. But the deacon had been correct in sensing something extraordinary about the man. It was not that he had been bored with his pleasures, though he had been bored with the deacon. Not that he was weary of surfeit, though he was tired of the private ritual with which he surrounded it. Rather, Yuzaburo remained so superstitious that it amounted to a religious calling.

He now realized that he was in an extraordinary situation. The reason was that it was, in his experience, absolutely impossible that any woman be this entirely and fearfully unappetizing. This being so, it followed that something he did not understand was at hand, some phenomenon which set aside the laws of nature as he knew them. The creature, therefore, was under some kind of enchantment, a spell which only the kiss of a handsome lover could break.

And, his reasoning continued, if she is this hideous at present, how infinitely lovely must be her true form. It must be of a splendor utterly to eclipse all of the ladies of my prior acquaintance. I will have her.

And so they were married. It was a simple and private ceremony as befitted both the nature of the occasion and the fact that the bride could be heard gnashing her teeth with pleasure, could be seen slobbering with happiness. The abbot averted his eyes as he married the pair and the customary wedding party was foregone so that the younger acolytes should not be frightened.

That night, side by side on the pallet they lay, Yuzaburo still as death, steeling himself, his bride tossing with happiness. He knew that he need but kiss her to cause her to become the most beautiful and desirable of all women, yet when he turned and saw her face he wondered if he could do even that necessary act. She lay beside him, tusks in view, eyes running with matter and tears. Holding his breath, closing his eyes, he brought his lips to hers. Fighting back his nausea, thinking he had bravely accomplished the necessary act, he opened his eyes.

The shock was severe. The enchanted maid was unchanged. Indeed, if anything, she was worse. Her features, loathsome in repose were now writhing with desire. She reached with two great arms and crushed him to her. What, he wondered, could have happened, and why had not the conventional magic worked? Kissing,

though uncommon enough in his usually more direct encounters, was known as a sovereign balm for all enchantments. And now he was pressed yet more tightly to her fetid chest, her great thighs wrapping themselves like snakes about him.

Could more then be necessary, he wondered. In all stories he had heard it was the kiss which awakened beauty. Perhaps, horrid thought, that kiss was but the symbol for a more intimate union. His heart sank as this probability grew.

She, in the meantime, rolling back forth, making the very house creak, was divesting herself of her bridal kimono. Horror upon horror was revealed. He started back in terror, but she was already upon him, stripping him of his marriage finery, ripping and tearing until she had him naked before her. Whimpering, sobbing, she ran her great hands over him, shamelessly took into one large palm the famous prick. Large though it was, it had now shrunk to that of a boy and the testicles hid themselves in terror. Yuzaburo was almost ready to faint. But not quite.

Superstition, like faith is a stubborn thing. Even in the face of horror it remains constant. I need only do this, said the acolyte to himself, and all will be accomplished. This being said, he at once began to see signs of eventual success.

The way she crouched in bed need not be that of an attacking monster. It could be that provocative pose of a woman secure enough to play. The red beslobbered mouth was different from but also kin to those ruby lips now ripe for kissing. Those grey and mountainous breasts, thumbs sticking from them, were, after all, but the bosom aroused, nipple erect. And those red-rimmed running eyes. They were those of a woman in love. He looked deeply into them, blotting out the horrid mask which surrounded them, Yes, he was sure, they were the eyes of a beautiful damsel who implored release and promised delights.

Very well, then. So thinking, prudently shutting his eyes, he climbed aboard his panting bride. One might have thought that his massive member would have refused this noisome task. But Yuzaburo's faith was strong and his prick was so well trained that it rose to any female flesh—and his bride, all considered, was resolutely female.

Yuzaburo, with a sense of wonder, felt his great prick stirring and then extend-

ing. With some pity for the enchanted maid but more for his faithful friend, he inserted it into the maw and began once more the simple exercise which he had so loved and which he now so hated.

She turned and writhed under him, tears and saliva flying. She shrieked and puffed in her pleasure, holding him tight with her great mottled thighs while he labored and endured. Then, finally, when she seemed sated, he felt, to his surprise, his own climax upon him. His blind if enormous member shot its message deep into her and he fell upon her body with that grateful and reverent embrace he had bestowed upon a thousand others in every way unlike her.

Only then did he open his eyes. The shock was extreme. There she lay, hideous as ever, perhaps even more so that he now had some intimate knowledge of her loathsomeness. With a cry of despair he fell into a deep and exhausted slumber while she crooned and cradled his head on her biceps.

In the morning she renewed her demands for his attentions. Manful in his despair, he began to think in terms of mystical numbers. Seven times or, worse, seven days, or, horror, seven weeks. He began at once, hoping to satisfy the impossible requirement which his own superstition had created.

It required, eventually, seventy years. And all during this time he worked and believed and never once doubted that the horror he was mounting was any other than some poor and enchanted maiden. And as he labored he bit by bit grew used to those tusked lips which were so greedy only because they were so hungry.

Her great thighs seemed to grow smoother over the years of his polishing. He came to know and to accept her great breasts and her broad and tub-like back. His member willingly woke and went about its daily task, soon accustomed to the commodious nest in which it found itself. He no longer thought of any other woman. All paled in importance to this one for she was his task. And, too, he would not have had the energy for any other.

Finally, when both were ninety and he was beginning to tire, he found her beautiful. This he did not know because he had long forgotten the enchanted maid, presumably imprisoned there. And yet he had, without realizing it, succeeded. He



found her beautiful as she was and if he recalled the reason he had so labored for seven decades it was like trying to remember some thought he had had as a child, curious, innocent, sage in its way but of no value.

The deacon, long dead, had been right. Yuzaburo was unusual because such faith is unusual. Faith has its own reward. Yuzaburo was happily married to a woman he loved and who loved him. She was no more unintelligent than he and, at the age of ninety, which they were, one could not have called either of them beautiful. Or, rather, they were both beautiful in that manner which age alone allows.

The temple at Kanazawa was as worldly as ever but it had now its single distinction. Yuzaburo was still an acolyte, and a ninety year old acolyte was unusual enough. But, more, he was a living exemplar of faith and without faith nothing is to be accomplished.

The new deacon, now fifty himself, saw this. He even had hopes for the Kanazawa temple and its lenient abbot. A large prick, he decided, did not mean necessarily a large spirit, but its simple exercise, its simply being there meant that the owner lived in at least one kind of extreme. This being so he had an opportunity to become extreme in other ways as well. The deacon looked down at himself, slightly smaller than what he guessed was average, and sighed.

Still, he consoled himself, faith is possible to us all. And faith creates miracles. Such as Yuzaburo's. For the wedding of Yuzaburo, his happy marriage, was in its way miraculous. Many and varied are the presumed ways of god. Certainly as many and surely as various are the ways of men.

*Donald Richie*

✿ *Stefano*

(dead in Rome, 2002)

Chianti and vodka. Porcini tossed  
in steaming cords of pasta.  
Everyone who came through the door was met  
with your dash to the cucina,  
wit countered with food,  
class met by its isotope, style.  
Hospitality proved everyone at length  
an exile. It was your talent,  
after years and worlds to equate  
the walk-in with the friend,  
the stranger with the family  
you would not have. But houses  
and habitués were your line:  
to each an assignable place.  
Your job and life merged more neatly  
than the bratty painters and poets  
gobbling the spreads at your famous parties  
before swarming the corners where  
some spidery countess or other still held court.  
In that world of casual, contrived  
rendezvous you found sweet order  
a Wilde would have admired,  
dancing mask-to-mask, who  
were otherwise a long-ago injured child  
nauseated by the turning of the knob,  
parents' return, the grinding of keys.

*David Rigsbee*

## ☯ The Little House by the Interstate

There is always the long horizon,  
the double gray ribbon of road.

In the yard of the little house  
by the interstate,

the young boy lies face down.  
He has stopped screaming.

Already, what was once his dog  
has become a shapeless form

on the pavement. The mother  
and father show each other

their eyes of pain. Soon,  
he will come inside.

They will not have to tell him how  
what we love is taken away.

*James Michael Robbins*

## ☞ The Myth of the Millionth Wave

It begins with the loneliness  
Of the solitary figure in the cliffs  
Staring as the waves smell  
Toward their deaths

The unbearable waiting  
For a return from the sea  
Even when return  
Is beyond belief

Grows and is dashed  
Over and over  
On the rocks of the mind  
And grows again

Until the need for the vigil  
Becomes more than vigil itself  
A reason for expectation  
And the counting begins.

*James Michael Robbins*

## ☯ Points of Inflection

1

Dodging the sharp stick,  
Turning,  
The world a blur  
And inconsequential.

2

Walking the slope  
Of the roof,  
The feet slipping  
Out and away,  
Having one chance  
To reach the ridge,  
Making it,  
Chest heaving,  
Hair standing on end.

3

Sliding slowly into her  
That initial entrance,  
Ecstasy binding,  
Building its deep edifice,  
Tumbling it down.

*James Michael Robbins*

⌘ Revelation in Noir

A fedora stares through a dim window.  
A man is under it  
In shadow, a gray glow on one cheek,  
A faint gleam on the chin.

He'll only tell you what you already know.  
The skies thunder it.  
His voice cracks when he starts to speak.  
The clouds enfold like skin.

*James Michael Robbins*

## ✿ Under a Low Ceiling

*"Can the heart become distorted,  
contract deformities and incurable  
infirmities, under the pressure of  
disproportionate grief, like the  
spinal column under a low ceiling?"*

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

"Too bad,"  
the deformed man said

staring at the thing in the mirror  
he shook his head

too late to disagree  
too late too late

he opened himself  
like a gate

and watched the stain  
as it spread

and when it covered the distance  
between peace and dread

he laid himself out  
nice and straight.

*James Michael Robbins*

## ☞ RX for Education: Take one poem a day

Many years ago when I was beginning my Master's Degree in Special Education at Fordham University in New York, I had the good fortune to read a short excerpt from a textbook on mental retardation. It was a story that I stumbled upon by accident, but it has never left me. Indeed it was a story that has affected the nature of my teaching from that moment on. It is a story that has led me onto the path of poetry not for any particular educational rubric reason but for the sheer beauty of its words and their ability to move our spirits.

The story recounted a simple scene that played itself out every evening at the home for the severely mentally challenged. It was the custom of the facility to gather the residents into a warm and comfortable room with old overstuffed chairs and fireplaces raging with flames that belied the chill of the remoteness of the people. They sat staring off into space giving little signs of consciousness of their surroundings. Every evening an old black cleaning lady arrived, mop in hand, and spoke to each person as she worked. Every evening the people simply continued to stare off into space, giving little sign of life and no response. The ritual continued for months. Finally, no longer able to endure this mystery, the security man said, "Lady, these people are retarded. Why do you talk to them every night?" She replied, "Well, there's somebody in there somewhere." The cleaning lady knew instinctively and spiritually what we rarely recognize and seem to be on the verge of losing in education in America. There is somebody in there somewhere in each of the students in our classes, and the path to the "somebody" may very well begin not with a series of Standards or standardized tests but with a poem.

Every day in my 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes at an urban middle school in New York, I begin with a Poem of the Day. The goal of this activity does not particularly tie into any of the State's Standards, nor do we dissect their symbolism. Sometimes the poems lead into the lesson at hand, but most of the time they do not. The poems were initially chosen because, well, I liked them. The poems were chosen to touch the hearts of my students from other countries and other cultures. We read Langston Hughes, Gary Soto, and Robert Frost. We read Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou. We read "Why Am I So Brown" by Trinidad Sanchez, Jr., and "Aprender el Ingles" by Luis A. Ambroggio. We read "Harvest at Madison



High", by Kemp Gregory (a particular favorite of some of my middle school boys). We read in English and we read in Spanish. Students who are native Spanish speaking are invited to reread the poems after I have had a go at them in my "gringa" accent. Although I speak Spanish and my rendition is technically accurate, it is no match for the beauty of the music of sounds that flow from the tongues of the students themselves. No hay palabras to describe the pride in the students as the poems are read. No hay palabras to describe the scene in an 8th grade class as students sit straight up as though they are afraid they may miss a word of the poem. No hay palabras porque las palabras son todas!

We do not (I insist) perform an autopsy on the literature, and students are not asked to regurgitate the meaning of the colors Frost chose for his poems. It is a simple ritual that has no greater goal than to infuse young people with the love of poetry and with the feelings that only a poet and a poem can release. It is a simple ritual that is designed to expose young people to as many poems as possible.

Had I been a seer I could not have predicted the explosion of enthusiasm, interest, and anticipation this activity has engendered in all of my classes. Students one would never have thought would have a remote interest in reading, much less hearing, a poem have asked if they might read some of their own poems. In fact, as this ritual grew, I invited students to bring in poems they liked and poems they had written. Students, I am ashamed to admit, that I would never have suspected of possessing the heart of a poet came alive and stood and read their poems.

Students in my special education class have spent hours on the computer investigating Web sites and printing poems. Students who are illiterate have dictated poems to friends and have asked others to get more poems for them. Students who barely lift their heads from their desks (unless I am serving home-made brownies) ask, "Where is the poem of the day?" if I spend too much time introducing the lesson and do not get to the poem quickly enough! And these students have begun to write poems of their own!

Jessica, an African-American 7th grader writes of freedom and racial prejudice and hope and pride. She says, "Does everyone know they're free / Nothing holding me back / From my dreams and aspirations," while Morgan, a little 6th grader

writes of freedom of a different kind. She wants to move out of her little self-contained special education class and into the world of inclusion, into the real world. She writes of being free. She is particularly moved by Langston Hughes' "I Too Sing America." She knows what it means to be sent to the kitchen when company comes. Poetry has given her indomitable spirit even greater power and has given shape to her request that she be moved. She hears power when poems are read and feels more power when she herself writes. In her poem "Freedom," she says, Freedom is spirit

Freedom is best  
So you won't have to be bossed around  
So much  
No one can tell you what to do  
Like you can't go to the college that you  
Want to  
If you don't like the guy who's your  
President  
It's all right  
That's why it's good to be free.

Angelane writes about friendship and love. Jhony M., who also writes of love, told me, "I have a poem in my head." Then five minutes later he said, "Can I write the poem I have in my head right now?" Bryan asked, "Can I write a second one?" and Robert simply said, "I am good at poetry."

There is a sense that poetry has become like our New York State Standards and a sense that only a very select few will earn a "4" (exceeds the Standards) in appreciation. Only a select few can value, enjoy and understand poetry. The contrary is true. There is "someone in there somewhere" who not only understands poetry but feels it deeply in his soul. There is "someone in there somewhere" who is moved by Dylan Thomas. Perhaps Jhony and Morgan cannot write an essay exploring the meanings and symbols of Thomas' poetry, but I doubt Thomas wrote it with that in mind. In fact, he wrote it to be read, heard and felt. Jhony and Morgan can and do

feel and understand the words, "Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Perhaps Bryan only reads on a second grade level, but he is motivated to keep a poetry journal where he writes his own poems and copies others he loves. Perhaps Eduardo is illiterate and cannot read the poems at all but he can and does hang on every word. It is Eduardo who so loves poetry that he has his "buddies" find good poems for him, and he brings the poems to class.

We have become a nation of "educational measurements." Each educational task has a rubric and each rubric its grid —4 points, —6 points. New York State has a set of Standards to measure student achievement. The mantra today is, "How did our students do on the tests? Did they meet the standards?" I wonder, how do you create a rubric for the appreciation of poetry? How do you measure a child's pleasure at hearing Gary Soto or a Mexican girl's pleasure at hearing "Aprender El Ingles" read in Spanish and in English? How do you measure an illiterate child's joy in hearing Langston Hughes or a Jewish child's pride at poems written in concentration camps? How do you construct a rubric for this? How do you contain this magic?

Poetry belongs to all students in all schools, whether in Scarsdale Middle School, the inner city, or some log cabin in a remote corner of the Appalachian mountains. Poetry belongs to us all. LaToya is now an 8th grade student to whom poetry belongs. When I had her as a student in 6th grade, we shared our poems of the day. LaToya's grammar isn't perfect, and she struggles to write a paragraph, but the words of her poem flow freely and uninterrupted. Now, two years later she still carries around books of poetry. She is that "somebody who was in there" when she first started hearing Hughes and Frost and Morrison. She is that "somebody" for whom the poet writes, whose ultimate desire—indeed, mission—is that no one in love with language be left behind.

*Rita Rohrmann*

## ☼ COMING TO TERMS

Every dawn from our deep film noir  
of sleep we plummet  
into the day's grim technicolor, squinting,  
not ready for all that brightness.

We try to modify it with coffee  
and the morning paper with its overweight  
nightmares, but the color creeps in,  
the windows almost growling with it.

Then, of course, the birds sing of their  
great relief that night has ended.  
This helps and takes us back  
to the way things used to happen.

A cigarette with the coffee let us see  
how a day had within it eddies  
and kisses and quick spurts of hope—  
possible journeys into some light

so sugary sweet it would feed us  
forever if we could remember  
how it was done. And we set out,  
knight errants, swashbuckling our way

into those mornings like crusaders.  
Those memories die away and we  
are back with no grails to call our own  
but we do manage to shake some

darkness from our dark dreams,  
striking a bargain with the birds  
and their delight in finding  
a sunrise one more time.

*Vern Rutsala*

✿ Five Haiku

Leaves under my feet;  
    There is something I always  
        Wanted to tell you

Even one skilled with crayons  
    Could not color this fall morning  
        Inside the lines

Late December night;  
    My cat wants to go outside  
        To eat some cold grass

It's a whiskey night;  
    No rocks, straight, bitter but true—  
        Sorry, I love you

A trace of fragrance  
    Clings to the dead flowers  
        On the cusp of August

*Michael Saleeby*

## ☼ Life in the Country

In the last third of the fifties, the *Alarma* was a very popular, nation-wide tabloid that described the bloodiest, cruelest and meanest criminal events that took place in Mexico City. The tabloid also included a section of puzzles and entertainment.

At that time, we were living in a small town in southern Mexico. There was no electricity in this region, and the radio was the most popular means of communication. My father was, I must say with a certain sense of shame, an avid reader of the bloody *Alarma*. I feel it necessary to point out that such a magazine was not to reach the younger people in the family, and only the adults had access to it. My father cut, in a very careful way, the section of entertainment and puzzles and he forwarded that to us, so we could have some fun.

On a very hot and humid afternoon in May, my father left one copy of the tabloid among the threads of the hammock. With twisted curiosity, I took the magazine in my hands. On the front page of the tabloid was a news story that made the back of my neck get stiff. The tabloid, made of poor quality paper, showed a title in red that said, "Hit her with a baseball bat, stabbed her with a kitchen knife and finally killed her." My first reaction was to abandon such reading, but the curiosity was stronger than I, so I kept reading.

The story was about a jealous husband who killed his wife in a moment of insanity: a crime of passion. The husband's anger was so disproportionate that after hitting and stabbing his wife, he took a gun and shot her. After the crime was consummated, the husband took the body of the poor woman, dismembered her, and made her into tamales. The killer sold the tamales among his neighbors and friends. The magazine remarked that never in the history of the Colonia Bodojo in Mexico City had there been such high quality and tasteful tamales sold. I knew that if my father caught me reading this demonic magazine, I would be in trouble. I left the magazine in the same position I found it in and I abandoned the room.

The hot weather in my town can reach the nineties, and that afternoon was no exception. Heavy drops of sweat were dancing on my forehead and others small-

er in size, were sprouting on my upper lip. My mother was calling me for lunch, but I decided to play deaf and go to the store for a soda. I was not hungry at all after this bloody history.

Soda in hand, I looked for the shade of the almond trees. I sat down and started to drink my soda. My mind was running wild, thinking about the story of the human meat tamales. I said to myself, this only happens in Mexico City. The chilangos (people from Mexico City) are degenerate by nature. We people from the south are jarochos and are simple people, well-born Catholic fellows, with good manners and feelings.

Except for the intense hot weather, my town was beautiful. The landscape resembled an earthly paradise. Big trees with mangos and avocados decorated a multicolored horizon that died among the profiles of the mountain. The lemon, plum and tamarind trees, the banana plants and the sugar cane fields complemented the turquoise green color of the landscape. But I was in another world; with my mind traveling to Mexico City, I was thinking of its inhabitants that are so quick to anger and crave exotic snacks. I exercised my mind thinking how to contrast the sound of this story against the clean and transparent environment of my town and its customs.

*The Mexican macho is a hermetic person, closed in himself, capable of keeping a secret that has been entrusted to him. His manliness is judged for the invulnerability he shows toward his enemy's weapons or to the impact of the exterior world. The Mexican macho never cracks or backs down.*

—Octavio Paz, in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*

The sun was unloading its anger against the stones and the roof of the houses. I was immersed in the labyrinth of dark thoughts. A man was approaching with a slow, almost tired pace. He looked for refuge under the almond tree's shade. "Hi, how are you?" he said with a gentle voice. "Fine," I answered with the same



degree of courtesy and coldness.

I knew this man; let's say that his name was X. I do not want to use proper names because I feel that I would remove the human values of my characters. The man was tall and slim, in his thirties, with chest and biceps well developed. His face showed Indian features. His glance projected determination, and from his manners I could guess that he was a rooster fighter.

*The Mexican young or old, criollo or mestizo, farmer or professional, is the kind of person that shuts himself away. His face is a mask and so is his smile.*

—Octavio Paz

Other people's silence can bother me, and pretty much I am indifferent to other people's troubles. As a general rule, I try to speak first, because this allows me to evade other people's questions. To speak is a problem in itself because, trying to break the silence and therefore the discomfort that it provokes in me, I always ask stupid questions or I engage myself in irrelevant and worthless conversations. Usually I end up damning myself for not keeping my mouth shut.

That I do not feel compassion for other people's troubles is a problem in itself because this kind of feeling crashes against my mother's Christian teachings and beliefs. The point is that I feel guilty for not feeling guilty for other people's troubles. Trying to stop this wild horse that is my egotism, I make an effort, in a very artificial way, to not condescend and be "nice" in my treatment of other people's emotions.

The unexpected arrival of X made me reconsider the possibility to look for another place where I could be by myself. A second thought told me that I had arrived at this place first, and therefore X was an intruder and he was invading my privacy; if somebody needed to move, that was X.

X was silent for a while. I had the weird sensation of being observed, and my attitude and manner changed. I wanted to drink my soda in peace. After a

moment of contemplation X asked about my father. I told him that "the old man" was fine and I added thanks. Corresponding to the same courtesy, I asked about his wife, who from now on we'll call E.

The question had the effect of an uppercut and X seemed suddenly grouchy, but he recovered very fast and said, "She is fine, thank you." I thought this is not a good subject for conversation because this guy looked distressed. I decided that the best thing I can do was take my soda and get out of there.

With a quick movement, X took from his trousers' pocket a small bottle of aguardiente, and he drank a generous sip. X's Adam's apple moved up and down, and, struggling with the frictional effects of the alcohol, he passed the back side of his left hand over his lips. Without saying one single word, he extended the bottle to me. "No, thank you very much," I said, trying to be polite.

"No, we are not OK," said X suddenly, as if he were speaking to himself. "Maybe you do not know, but E and I are in the process of being separated." Divorce was not common in that time, and only death could break the marriage vows. The couples that could not carry the heavy weight of the cross named marriage were segregated from our rural society, though pretty much the separation was never defined. In our society the blame or guilt fell over the wife's shoulders, and she was considered unable to keep her family united. The man was a man and he based his action on this axiom.

*The Mexican woman is the goddess of the creation, but also of the destruction.*

—Octavio Paz

"A week ago," said X, showing no emotion on his Indian features, "E said that she did not want to live with me anymore. I think she had a lover." No emotions whatsoever were displayed in his words or on his face. I knew that E was a religious, pious woman, a good mother, and until that day I thought she was also a good wife.

"I have the suspicion that she has a lover," said X again, with a serene voice. "And as a matter of fact this suspicion is not amazing to me. E is a very hot woman and is very difficult to satisfy in bed. I have precocious ejaculation followed by long periods of narcolepsy. In our everyday family routine everything is fine. We both like to dance, we agree on the kind of education that we want for the kids, she manages the money very well, and I have no complaints about the household administration. She likes my sense of humor and in general terms we make a good couple. The separation is due to the bedroom problems that we have," he said in a low voice as if he was speaking to himself.

I was flabbergasted. The revolution of E's infidelity was in itself an amazing event, but for a Mexican rooster admitting to be the cause of such a major issue as being unable to satisfy his woman was beyond my belief.

"Being quite honest," said X and taking another sip of aguardiente, "I don't know if I love my wife." "We are from the Oaxacan mountains in the part known as the Mixtec Knot. The economic situation in this area is very bad." He looked at me directly in the eyes and with a grave voice he asked me, "Have you ever known starvation?" "Of course," I said without thinking. X started to laugh like somebody was telling him a joke. His laugh was saturated with alcohol and it made me feel angry.

Looking at him again, I wondered who he really was and why he chose to confide his secret in me. I found satisfaction in the fact that in spite of my youth, a rooster fighter was considering me a man with enough testicles to keep a secret.

I can write on this piece of paper all the things that I heard that summer afternoon, but what I cannot tell is what kind of intricate labyrinths molded the personality of X. X, as I said before, was a tall and slim man, chest and biceps well developed, an eagle nose and thin lips. He wore pleated trousers finished in a kind of a small pipe at the ankles and resembling the pants worn by jockeys. Shirtless, he wore only a sleeveless T-shirt. His hat made of palm leaves was cocked at an angle, almost resting on one ear. His boots were black with metal protectors on the tips, giving X's steps a clear and crisp sound. I must place

emphasis on his belt, which was small and very shiny.

"So, do you know starvation?" he said, throwing me away from my thoughts. "When I speak of starvation I am making reference to famine. I am asking you about the feeling that catches you in the morning just after you wake up and you know that there is no breakfast. I am speaking about the fact that you did not eat breakfast and there is no lunch or dinner. I am speaking about going to bed and realizing that tomorrow will be just another miserable day with an empty stomach."

X said without emotion, "I was lucky. My mother, God knows how, managed to come up with some breakfast. It was usually a tortilla with chile and a few sips of atole. The rest of the meal came in an aleatory form. I was born and lived in this place undernourished and with no formal education. When I was fifteen years old, my father came and said to me, 'This evening you will meet your wife.'"

"That afternoon my father arrived with a bottle of aguardiente and a chicken. We went to the Xotlaniua family house. We were received by the head of the house, and the nuptial arrangements were made without ever asking me what I thought. That night I went to bed wondering which of the three Xotlaniua girls would be my wife."

"The next day I knew that E would be my wife. Until now, I respected my father's decision and I thought that his decision was wise. E and I got married, we lived for a while in our hometown, but the situation was difficult. We moved to Oaxaca City and we made some money selling artcrafts to the American tourists."

"The sugar cane harvest brought us to this region. I was a sugar cane cutter, but luckily I became a worker in the sugar factory. E has been helping all this time selling tortillas, and in a very modest way she made a small but significant contribution to our family economy."

"Now she tells me that she no longer wants to live with me. I do not think that we love each other. We did not have this opportunity in life. Our tradition stole this gift from us, but I know she is mine." He stared at me for a while, and I had the sensation that I was more than a confidant—I was a witness.

X said no more words. He took from his trousers' pocket a package of ciga-

rettes. He offered me one and I accepted it with the intention to break the conversation. After lighting the cigarettes, each of us sank into our own thoughts. The hot weather started to decline; the sun's rays were filtering among the clouds and falling semi-dead over the palm leaves, mixing golden tones with the green of the foliage.

Without saying one word, X abandoned the place. I took a deep breath. What could I do? What could I say? Somebody trusted me with a secret, and I told myself that this secret would go with me to the grave. The morbidity was rotting in my guts. Would it be possible that E has a lover? If she has one, who can this man be?

I came back home and tried to put aside X and E's marital problems and I decided not to worry about the human meat tamales. I focused myself on removing the rank smell of cigarettes that had gotten in my clothes.

The rows of days and nights that make weeks and the succession of weeks that make a month ran without news. Our community was a rural community, and by that particular time the main concern was the rainy season. The rains arrived by mid-May, and there was a lot of unharvested sugar cane in the fields.

One rainy morning in May, somebody knocked at the door. My father opened the door and outside there was a man soaked in water. He said something to my father in a low pitch. My father went to his room, changed his clothes and left the house with haste. My father, the honorary sheriff in town, was in charge of reporting minor incidents to the country authorities. So being requested with such urgency, logic dictated that something had happened in town.

Back by noon, he looked in shock. He spoke with my mother, and we could see the expression of terror reflected in her face. Later I knew about the tragic event. The X family had been murdered. The wife's body was found dismembered all over the house. The kids were executed in their beds, each with a bullet in the head. The body of X was not found.

We gave a Christian service to the bodies, and it was a very emotional burial. Three days later two young farmers found a body in a state of semi-decomposi-

tion among the sugar cane fields. The body showed the characteristics of X—strong pectorals and biceps, T-shirt, the funny pants. The face had already been eaten by wild animals.

The authorities decided that this body did indeed belong to X. The hypothesis was that some cruel assassin killed X's family and took X to the sugar cane fields where he was tortured and finally killed. The murderer had to have been an outsider, maybe somebody from Mexico City. This hypothesis sounded good and since we were farmers, good Christian people, it was difficult to imagine that the murderer was among us.

Time brought peace and the people engaged in their everyday activities. I never made any comments about my conversation with the late X and his marital problems. Sometimes it is better to let the dead people rest in peace.

*The Mexican possesses very few things. He has no house, he has no car, he has no material belongings, so he considers his wife his property.*

—Samuel Ramos, in *The Mexican: Psychology of His Motivations*

On February fifteenth, 1974, my father sent me to Veracruz City to pick up the results of some analysis for my mother. After doing so, I wandered through the city and the harbor for a while. In the evening of the same day, I went to the bus central to catch the bus to my town. My town was very small and there were not a lot of buses running to that area, so while I was waiting for the next bus, I decided to open the envelope with my mother's diagnosis.

I took the piece of paper and read its contents. The analysis displayed several numbers, quantities and parameters, but the message was clearly written. It said that my life would never be the same. My mother had terminal cancer. It felt like a giant hand had taken me by the throat. There were people around me, but I did not hear them. My glance was foggy from the tears that were desperately trying to escape around my eyes, while I made titanic efforts to keep myself in one

piece. The world around me and I were in a different wavelength.

I boarded my car, guided by instincts more than by reason. I took a seat and wondered why bad things happen to good people. Looking out the window, I tried to find an answer. Some people outside the bus were moving in an endless motion; others remained patiently sitting down, waiting for their destiny. Among the people who were sitting down, I saw a guy in his fifties with some air of familiarity. The guy was staring at me. I had not the strength, nor the desire, to ask myself who the heck he was. The guy kept staring at me and I sustained the glance. My bus was ready to go when the guy came directly to my window. He knocked on it and I got close to the window, thinking that maybe he was a banana chip seller and he thought I was a potential customer.

When I approached the window, he drew a cynical smile on his face, and without introduction or protocol, he said a very short phrase. He said, "She was mine." I had no time to react or think because in that moment my bus departed.

*Domingo Sanchez*

## ☼ Peek-a-boo

Walking behind Nicola I go walking along, too  
the *mistral* blowing it was the land of chameleons  
but I never saw any chameleons  
Don't know why  
Every nook and cranny of the sky cleared out by the *mistral*  
So very blue empty

### **On that day the wind continued to shake up an electric cord**

#### **in the brain one begins to cut off one's ear**

Speaking of headaches many ear stumps  
are springing up quivering this land

I've heard that, sometimes,  
the ghosts of ears go for a walk

Although we fasten the doors securely,  
in the dead of night occasionally  
shipwrecks come along  
There, whenever the dim, gloomy light seeps in  
it's not possible to see well  
and straining one's eyes over there, is it the open sea of a corner of a shed?  
Ocean waves that rattle the shutters or a rough-feeling sandy beach  
sometimes white waves in the dark, too  
only to be seen largely overlapping being there who?  
and why? (me) don't know

There is a white pony on the lavender plain  
Hmm, Nicola, if you rode it what would it say  
the white pony?



The year 19—Nicola four years old the tall mother with young hair takes  
a picture of her riding a pony for the first time  
She, now, with her long-winded tales a net attached to her waist  
she keeps on going

Like a tube-shaped seashell, curved, white narrow  
Very narrow to the extent that one goes inside, the street  
becomes narrow ultimately, I wonder if it will become an ear hole

Here, this is a labyrinth she, coming and going  
between the lines of her letter labyrinth  
No voice coming out a bird that has just become deaf and dumb

a long thing pulling away from a deaf and dumb bird  
Going up a hill up on the roof I don't know  
if there's bread or not I don't know whether or not  
the *mistral* is dropping stone teardrops one two  
Already from some time before dead people in bunk beds  
snoring loudly, I don't know whether or not they can sleep  
I must not wake him up Shh!  
When he wakes up, his head could start aching so  
Nicola gently, without the sound of footsteps descends  
That sound of *not* wanting to make the sound of footsteps from between the lines  
sometimes  
holding on by small, sweet toes  
she becomes audible

To fall into the labyrinth black  
shadows run digging deeply into a narrow road  
an arcade a side door more and more along the narrow road

running like black silk dogs, their tongues hanging out round and round  
in the end, pulling back on the ribbon-leash of the king of darkness

The day the *mistral* stopped its dance  
all the old houses opening up their southerly terraces and windows  
to wait the iron stands sufficiently hot  
the rise of the steam a perfect time  
like sheeps' necks in a row in front of the gate  
like a bullfight's gold-horn decoration  
coming soon waiting for the festival

Around that time  
I'm in a bright room talking about a mild shipwreck  
offering biscuits and coffee he just like flesh  
the *mistral* and chameleons stumps of ears  
and Nicola in a pink cap  
then the lavender and soon  
then I start to sing

this kind of song

Walking behind Nicola I go walking along, too  
playing labyrinth and peek-a-boo  
In the land of chameleons with how many thousands  
of peek-a-boo-playing spirits of the dead has one gotten mixed up  
Hmm who why!  
To meet ah, well peek-a-boo

Kazuko Shiraishi  
Translated by Edward Gomez

## ☼ Kissing

Seeing my father and mother  
kiss in his last days  
was like a still from Casablanca.  
Morphine masked his pain;  
he braced withering arms  
on the aluminum walker.  
He wore two split-back gowns,  
a skein of tubes dangled  
from ceiling to floor.  
Mama propped her arms on the walker,  
leaned into his wilting body.  
His fresh shaven face  
left a hint of Aqua Velva on her cheek.  
His skin soft against her worried face;  
her painted lips moist against his thirsty mouth.  
Unsteady in love and life,  
not knowing how many days he had left,  
he pressed his aging love against his bride;  
trusted her to the eternity of his closed eyes.

*Marty Silverthorne*

## ☿ Black Coffee

The black coffee of morning is sweet and low.  
I savor pages of Neruda, ponder you naked.  
The 8:05 train screams from its iron cage,  
I know the pain of being framed by steel.  
When I walk with you in darkness  
seduced by scents of ivory skin  
fragrant as magnolia blossoms, I explode.  
My body wants to give you the child I never could.  
I am dark within the coffee so sweet and low.  
I am drunk on this passion so sweet and low.  
I dream your velvet tongue circling my navel,  
sailing across the island of pubis,  
disappearing in uncharted darkness.  
I become an ocean, a sea and the fortress  
we have built around us is worth drowning for.

*Marty Silverthorne*

✿ THE LAST AVENUE PICKUP

What a great, green, and  
greener-still-with-patina  
business this is, this  
overgrown-with-vines, up-on-blocks  
pickup truck, long since drained  
of all fuel, long since stripped  
of all tires, but tireless  
in its still beauty, in its quiet nobility  
at the edge of town, where Last Avenue  
turns to dirt as it turns  
toward Table Mountain.

It stands today as a trail marker,  
this internal combustion conestoga, this  
chrome-and-steel covered wagon  
as if sprung full-grown from the soil,  
a Rocky Mountain on its own,  
an old trail blazer, an old pathfinder  
perched at the edge and pointing the way  
for pioneers yet to come.

*Craig Smith*

☯ SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 2000

I ate me some brains and eggs for breakfast and about ten I drove over to Baskin's to help him change out the water pump on that '51 Ford convertible he's been working on for 40 years. One of the bolt holes was stripped so we drove my truck down to NAPA and bought us a heli-coil repair kit, rethreaded the hole, and torqued on the new pump. Then we buffed up the 17-inch Signature wheels with them new Nitto NT radials, polished the 2 1/2-inch stainless headers, detailed the 350 V-8, and washed the clear-coated solar yellow urethane paint.

We drove to Shorty's for lunch. I drank three Bud Lights and ate a Penrose Tijuana Mama hot sausage and a pickled egg. Baskin didn't eat nothing. I'll bet he's lost 100 pounds since he started chemo. We watched the NASCAR race at the Michigan Speedway on TV and then rode around with the top down. At the light on Glebe and Glenwood some kids pulled up with that rap shit pounding out of big bass speakers. "What is it about those pissants that makes them believe I want to hear their music?" Baskin asked.

I went home and tried to fix the front door hinge and swore I'd never buy another Oakwood Home. The air conditioner is busted, and it must have been 130 inside that aluminum coffin. I opened the windows and turned on the fan, but it didn't do no good. I microwaved a Lean Cuisine Cheese Cannelloni and drank three more Bud Lights. I should've taken a shower, but the bathtub drain was clogged so I pulled on a clean tee-shirt and jeans.

About eight I stopped by Lindsey Lou's. She don't go out much since her mama died, but her air conditioner works good. We watched *East of Eden* on AMC, and she said we'd seen the movie at the drive-in back when we were dating, so I said to change the channel to wrestling. She said, "You know what the trouble with you is? You want to do just wherever it is you want to do." I said okay, we didn't have to watch wrestling but could she get me a beer and damn if she didn't get pissy. "If you want a beer go buy it your own damn self. I ain't fetching beer for my ex-husband." I got up and walked out the door. "Bushnell Hamp," I could hear her yelling after me, "you always was an asshole."

Stephen E. Smith

☯ SEPTEMBER MOURNING

What design there is in dominion's ring:  
a twitter in the field  
color in the wind  
a spider on feet of purest gossamer

numb in the name  
of the fluttering flag  
o say can the tattered one  
defend the fences fenced around  
and in and through this century of all times  
the way a baby's wrapped in a shawl or shirt for the  
tucking into the arms

clutching dear life so thin  
the stubborn holding on  
a giving in

*Shelby Stephenson*

## ✿ FAMILY TANGLES

Just when you find you have a place to sit down  
you trip over some cousin once removed from splendor  
as proprietor of some estate in the high country,  
clouds rolling away roads the way the mockingbirds  
tread closer home, their tails beating the earth:

now if the old people—I'm talking turkey, greatgreatgreats  
here—had had a creekrock etched with a name  
I'd know these things: was it Solomon  
who married Arey or David—I mean  
David, the son who married—oh well, could be air,  
just the same, for what it all comes to:

you're here and if someone remembers to etch a stone  
you remember parting as sister in the space  
you have: we're all the same: entanglements  
aplenty—unless you're adopted  
and then you really get up in the  
wandering dues you want to head  
at sometime or other; what's in a family,

one name, one line—can't keep a life,  
or if it can, it comes as someone else's  
surmise, mistake,  
and then it's myth, a truth  
a moth just as well keep aflutter  
the swell-time of passion and heads in  
hats off, even as the genial  
lie entangles and we cut loose.

*Shelby Stephenson*



## ✿ EDWARD FIELD, STAND-UP POET

Although Edward Field is forty-four and has been writing and publishing poetry since World War II, he is most surely a child of the Sixties. His first two volumes of poetry (*Stand Up, Friend, With Me*, 1963, and *Variety Photoplays*, 1967)<sup>1</sup> were published in the Sixties, and he was honored with the 1962 Lamont Poetry Award. But when one thinks about the conditions which have combined to shape the poetry of the Sixties, it becomes clear why Field had to wait until now for recognition. For instance, it seems that the decade has marked "the end of the Gutenberg era," that is, the end of the printed page as the most powerful mode of communication. This radical change had, of course, been predicted years ago by McLuhan; but it is indicative that only in this decade has the guru of the media himself, like Field, achieved national prominence. The Sixties indeed have witnessed a full scale renaissance of the Oral Tradition.

In poetry this tradition took root in the coffeehouses of the Fifties, where the first blows were struck at the Eliot and post-Eliot schools of poetic complexity. This point might seem at first highly debatable, but a single illustration should clarify the issue. Quite simply the poems of Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Crane, Tate, Eberhart, Wilbur, Roethke, et al., demanded reading and re-reading. Usually, in fact, they demanded study. Has it not become a cliché in literature classes to speak of poems working "on many levels" and only gradually yielding their treasures? The poems, on the other hand, of the Beat, experimental, or non-academic poets of recent years are meant to be spoken, to be caught by the ear at a single hearing. They must, therefore, be straightforward, accessible, immediately interesting, immediately entertaining.

It is not then surprising to find poets, many of whose publishing royalties are negligible, earning their incomes on the reading circuit—at colleges and religious centers, on television talk-shows, even in nightclubs and as headliners at acidrock concerts. Field has found himself relying on the circuit as his chief means of support. Allen Ginsberg is probably the leading breadwinner on this particular tour. It is interesting, in fact, to try to imagine any other poet in the whole history of literature more widely known in his lifetime than Ginsberg. If someone should object, "But how many people have actually read him?" . . . the

answer quite clearly is that a hell of a lot of people have heard him. Thus the question indeed is anachronistic.

As a result the poet of the Sixties has become, for better or for worse, something of a performer. It probably is not incidental that Field is also a professional actor as well as a poet, for the success of his poetry can be traced to skills as vital to the performer as to the poet: a sense of timing, a wry tone of voice, a gift for narration, a dead pan delivery, a separation that develops between narrator and narrative. At some of his readings Field, with the help of other actors, slides, lights, and music, acts out his poetry. However, all the flavor of his poems may be savored in silent as well as in public readings. They do not have to be performed. In fact Field's poetry is unique in the degree that it yields to close critical study, a fecundity not always found in most vocal verse. For example, Field has discovered and exploited the full mythological potential of old movies; he has developed the most distinctive voice since William Carlos Williams, another primarily oral poet; he has postulated a consistent and discernable world view; and he has found his own rhythm, diction, and style. All these features give his poetry a unity not found with consistency in modern poetry. It will be the purpose here to discuss and illustrate these characteristics of his poetry.

Writers for decades now have been dipping into the fertile font of the movies as a source of popular allusion. But no writer before Field quite recognized the depth of significance there. Walker Percy responded imaginatively in *The Moviegoer*, but Percy's protagonist used the movies mostly as a form of therapeutic projection. The fantasy world of the screen enabled him to better accept the limitations of the real world about him—a sort of existential variant on Blakean romanticism. Field, however, is more like Yeats and uses the movies somewhat in the manner Yeats does cabala. Unable to find sustenance in formal religion, Yeats created a personal set of symbols to serve as a mythic backdrop for his poetry. While Field does not develop his own system, he does creatively extract and synthesize the relevance old movies have to American culture. His role is closer to that of Homer or other recorders of myths. "My movie poems are not only an attempt at a personal mythology, but also a national mythology. The Frankenstein legend is of course a

perfect example of a nation choosing what is important and pertinent."

There are eleven poems in the "Old Movies" section of *Variety Photoplays*. As a group the poems cover nearly all the stock plots popular in the B-picture era of the Thirties and Forties. But each one also captures the archetypal value of the situation; that is, each one is seen as a basic story—however corny—that has shaped or recorded patterns of our emotional lives. At times this is laughable; often it is sad. And Field has perceptively realized that to present such a combination of emotions requires a blend of parody and pathos. Hollywood has down through the years, for reasons practical, given superficial treatment to themes often deeply universal. The Frankenstein legend is a case in point. As Field says, "I always think of that legend as being the prototype for all underdogs in the word." But while the movies might suggest this, they do not emphasize it. Horror sells better. And since B-pictures are essentially hack material, it means that to use them the poet must work with clichés, both in language and situation. And it takes poetical courage and skill to make such a combination successful. Field fortunately has both.

The first poem in the volume is "Curse of the Cat Woman." As every avid moviegoer knows, the plots of movies about cat women do not vary. Between clawings, the afflicted young lady falls in love with a young man, usually the protégé of a folklore professor. Naturally the emphasis is on horror. Little, if any, effort is devoted to character interest. But Field, just as one must do with myth, looks through to the meaning behind this standard melodrama: the tendency in man to kill the thing he loves. Wilde saw it, too, but in *Reading Gaol* grew wistful. Field's more Freudian approach, while far less somber, is no less pointed. The poem is short enough to quote in full:

It sometimes happens  
that the woman you meet and fall in love with  
is of that strange Transylvanian people  
with an affinity for cats.

You take her to a restaurant, say, or a show,  
on an ordinary date, being attracted  
by the glitter in her slitty eyes and her catlike walk,  
and afterwards of course you take her in your arms  
and she turns into a black panther  
and bites you to death.

Or perhaps you are saved in the nick of time  
and she is tormented by the knowledge of her tendency:  
That she daren't hug a man  
unless she wants to risk clawing him up.

This puts you both in a difficult position—  
panting lovers who are prevented from touching  
not by bars but by circumstance:  
You have terrible fights and say cruel things  
for having the hots does not give you a sweet temper.

One night you are walking down a dark street  
and hear the pad-pad of a panther following you,  
but when you turn around there are only shadows,  
or perhaps one shadow too many.

You approach, calling, "Who's there?"  
and it leaps on you.  
Luckily you have brought along your sword  
and you stab it to death.

And before your eyes it turns into the woman you love,  
her breast impaled on your sword  
her mouth dribbling blood saying she loved you  
but couldn't help her tendency.

So death released her from the curse at last,  
and you knew from the angelic smile on her dear face  
that in spite of a life the devil owned,  
love had won, and heaven pardoned her.

Three poems are devoted to the Frankenstein legend. And while it may be difficult to forget Mary Shelley's allegory, it is more interesting to read them with Field's own suggestion about underdogs in mind. In the first poem the monster, "who has never known kindness", escapes from the cruel baron, meets and makes friends with a kindly blind man. At first the monster is understandably suspicious of the old man's efforts to show him how to eat, drink, and smoke:

Then the blind man puts a cigar in the monster's mouth  
and lights a large wooden match that flares up in his face.  
The monster, remembering the torches of the villagers,  
recoils, grunting in terror. "No, my friend, smoke—gooood,"  
and the old man demonstrates with his own cigar.  
The monster takes a tentative puff  
and smiles hugely, saying, "Smoke—gooood,"  
and sits back like a banker, grunting and puffing.

And so for a while the monster, treated like the human he is capable of being, is happy. He sits and listens to the old man playing Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" on the violin:

... tears come into our dear monster's eyes  
and he thinks of the stones of the mob, the pleasures of mealtime,  
the magic new words he had learned  
and above all of the friend he has found.

The second poem on the legend, "The Bride of Frankenstein," describes the consequences of the Baron's attempt at a diabolical mating. He first "puts together" the intended bride:

... the prettiest monster-woman you ever saw  
with a body like a pin-up girl  
and hardly any stitching at all  
where he sewed on the head of a raped and murdered beauty queen.

Meanwhile, we learn that the bridegroom

... has been well prepared for coupling  
by his pinching leering keeper who's been saying for weeks,  
"Ya gonna get a little nookie, kid,"  
or "How do you go for some poontang, baby?"

But the bride chooses "death than that green slobber" and leaps off a parapet. His sex drive thwarted, the monster goes wild in a Freudian frenzy and destroys the lab and everyone in it. But perhaps all wasn't destroyed, Field reminds us in playful solemnity.

The third poem in the sequence is "The Return of Frankenstein." We learn that the monster didn't die; however, after years of inhuman treatment, he is now changed forever. He is society's own diabolic creation, ready now to devour the hand that has misshaped him:

that soft heart of his had hardened  
and he really was a monster now.

He was out to pay them,  
to throw the lie of brotherly love  
in their white Christian teeth.

"The Life of Joan Crawford" is the longest and possibly the best of Field's movie poems. No synopsis can do it justice. Running approximately 240 lines, it incorporates all the standard ingredients of most of Joan Crawford's movies as well as probably something like her own personal history. She is a slum child but beautiful and shrewd enough to avoid marriage with any of the men from her neighborhood:

because with them the future was sleazy with kids  
and the ruin of her figure before she was thirty—  
and no fun after the honeymoon  
except the Friday-night flight  
When he would come home stinking, having drunk up the paycheck  
and beat her black and blue  
when she threw the stack of overdue bills at him  
and then screw her viciously on the dining-room table.  
Some fun.

However, Joan does succumb to the handsome son of the richest man in town. The disparity in their social levels, however, does for a while make it impossible for them to marry:

My great love, she muttered sarcastically,  
he didn't even use a scum-bag.  
And she went off to the city  
Where she got a job as receptionist in an office.

After a long series of adventures and complications, Joan does manage to marry her rich lover and to find "her place in life at last. / They always said she'd make it up there." Ultimately we see her as the elegant hostess at a party where the miners mix with the swells, and the colored butler joins "in the fun with loud yaks." The poem, among other things, is a satirical variation on the theme of the

American dream, a comment on how blithely Hollywood dissolves age-old social obstacles of race, class, and environment to bring about the happy ending in the final scene. Joan Crawford, with Hollywood's help, has brought about a euphoric "new era, a classless society."

"What happened to May Caspar?" is a poetic footnote on an observation by McLuhan: how proud Americans are of their museums where they display a way of living they've made impossible. May Caspar is a living museum piece, one of "those faded queens of stage and screen." She lives in a shabby hotel off Times Square, drinks whiskey out of a perfume bottle, and tries to retain her beauty. But somehow her painted face "always comes out crooked." She is about to be evicted:

But wait, here comes a late rider:  
A message from the Museum of Modern Art!  
They are planning a May Caspar revival  
and she is wanted to appear "in person," like the old days.

Enroute to Hollywood she stops at an exclusive beauty resort where she is resurrected with "hormones, vitamins, embryo implants, and surgery." Once again on the set it's "May Caspar acts again!" But the strain is too much for her old heart stimulated by drugs, and the lights are too hot for her skin "held taut by invisible clips." She tries desperately to "think young, to hold everything up," but all collapses.

"White Jungle Queen" tells how a young Carolina girl became the goddess of a primitive tribe in darkest Africa. Thunder crashed when they were about to burn her at the stake. Now she lounges about in her "leopard skin nothings" with natives anxious to do her bidding: "Akimbo darling, get me another mango." Field's note on the poem is enlightening:

The poem is partly about our ideas of Africa and the Africans, as seen in the movies, that we want to believe, are brought up believing, that lie behind our refusal to accept the modern revolutionary third world. We



love our picture of darkest Africa, though, and that is touching—like loving the story of Little Black Sambo, but not being allowed to anymore. The sad thing is that our sexuality is involved in such a myth of savages, black and beautiful, in their jungle paradise.

Other poems in the section include: "She," which uses H. Rider Haggard's classic to suggest all similar adventure stories in which a "convenient avalanche opens a passageway that leads into the lost kingdom"; "Lower East Side: The George Bernstein Story," an amalgam of the countless musicals—half romantic, half naturalistic—that bombarded the public in the Thirties and Forties recounting the rags to riches stories of every leading American composer; "Sweet Gwendolyn and the Countess," which suggests that abductions of young maidens by countesses in medieval romances probably were inspired by either masochism, sadism, or lesbianism, or a bit of all three. The final poem in this section, "Nancy," derives from the comic strips, but its inclusion is quite easy to justify. Many comic strip characters have become as legendary as movie stars, and many have been adapted for the screen: Blondie and Dagwood, Flash Gordon, Jungle Jim, and Tarzan. Nancy is also a combination of Annie Rooney and Orphan Annie. It is the only poem in which Field uses rhyme, and its use serves to give it something like the sound and flavor of a child's story book. The theme, however, is humorously Freudian. Perhaps Nancy was orphaned due to the shadowy triangle involving her parents and her aunt who is now her guardian:

Poor Nancy's nature has been bent  
by this negative environment.  
She never will grow up at all  
but stay forever three feet tall.

Part Two of *Variety Photoplays* is entitled "Selected Short Subjects," more for its variety than for any relationship to movie short subjects. The subject matter includes such diverse topics as graffiti on lavatory walls, giraffes, wife swapping

between humans and giants, an invasion of jellyfish, and having an octopus for a pet. "Touriste de Banane by Georges Simenon" is about a novel made into a movie. Field calls the poem a "book review." It is interesting because it helps illustrate the limitlessness Field sees for poetry. "My definition of poetry is the 'literary art' meaning the whole literary art. Poetry can embrace the novel (Tolstoy called his novels poetical works), the play, the short story, the essay, the wanted poster, advertising commercials. Poetry can do anything; it also has a right to be as evanescent as news stories." "Touriste de Banane" is about a French youth whose past resembles something out of Zola. The "bourgeois structure of his life . . . shattered by scandal and tragedy" was described in an earlier, no doubt naturalistic, novel. The boy has run off to a Tahitian island:

[Such people] are called banana tourists  
because they think you can live off what grows wild,  
but stagger back into town eventually  
sick from malnutrition.

Also a great deal of his misery is due to the strict educational system of the lycee:

They grow up terribly polite, elegant and cold—all style,  
shaking hands with each other like midgets  
in short pants pulled up tight in the crotch.  
Underneath they are desperate like we all are.

Unfit for Paris, unable to find love or peace as a noble savage, the boy—a failure of his deterministic culture—commits suicide: "it is impossible to console a French boy in his metaphysical years."

The final poem in the volume, "The Tailspin," treats a situation thoroughly familiar to fans of old aviator movies: the old single seater caught inextricably in a tailspin. There is the inevitable close-up of the pilot's panic stricken face. He frantically fights the controls, but to no avail:

Going into a tailspin  
in those days meant curtains.  
No matter how hard you pulled back on the stick  
the nose of the plane wouldn't come up.

Field sees the moment as suggestive of a larger truth:

Who could have dreamed that the solution  
to this dreaded aeronautical problem  
was so simple?  
Every student flier learns this nowadays:  
You move the joystick in the direction of the spin  
and like a miracle the plane stops turning  
and you are in control again  
to pull the nose up out of the dive.  
In panic we want to push the stick away from the spin,  
wrestle the plane out of it,  
but the trick is, as in everything,  
to go with the turning willingly,  
rather than fight, give in, go with it.

It is appropriate that this poem was selected to conclude the volume, for it expresses the essence of the world view implied in both volumes. The philosophy can be termed existential, for there is a sharp sensitivity to the world's infinite cruelties in nature and society. Man abrades his fellow man out of an unfortunate universal "uptightness." Field suggests the wisdom of rolling with the universe's punches rather than standing too rigidly. When you fight life by trying to force it to conform to absolute standards, you merely aggravate old wounds or open new ones—often in other people. Parents, for instance, are a classic example of a group that consistently forgets to give in, go with it. They are constantly infusing their children with inexpugnable feelings of guilt and shame. The poem "It," for

example, touches on the ineptness of parents' handling of the matter of personal sex education:

Of girls you could speak; boys were unmentionable.  
She must have believed about boys  
that if you train them not to touch it  
and don't ever mention it, it doesn't exist.

But it did: I woke up one morning  
with a hard-on that wouldn't go down,  
come all over the sheets and no way to wipe it up  
and the whole family around and nowhere to hide.  
This was unthinkable, and I prayed and prayed  
for it to go away forever.

Such acts of typical parental thoughtlessness are capable of leaving children with pasts, like Field's, that even psychiatrists "haven't been able to help me bear the thought of" (SUFWM).

Field has no hesitancy about being extremely personal in his poetry. He writes about intimate problems without any apparent effort to hide them behind the veil of persona. However, such candidness contributes to his charm because it contains nothing lewd. The reader never feels he has been lured into too private a place. Field does not embarrass. This attribute may be traced partially to the fact that the very adult Field has not lost his child-like ingenuousness. A child's frankness may be surprising but hardly ever lascivious.

All but a few of Field's poems have the same speaker. The voice is one from the East Coast, from the big city, Jewish, male, impish, and possesses a sense of timing as keen as Jack Benny's. In short, it is Field himself. Rather than a cosmic view, he assumes one that is more nearly microscopic; for the world Field lives in is one made and kept small by preference. He is all too aware of the absurd world, "this nowhere, this noplac I am now" (SUFWM). But instead of rebelling angrily against it, Field goes with the spin and concentrates on the bemusing

pleasures that come into his life. His is a redoubtable love of life conceived in the nihilism of an East Side walk-up and nurtured, like a lonely petunia, in the window box outside his coldwater flat. His positivism is reflected in his likes and dislikes. The telephone, for instance, is anything but a nuisance to him. "It tells me that I am in the world and wanted / It rings and I am alerted to love or gossip" (SUFWM). He also likes donkeys:

They are not silent like workhorses  
Who are happy or indifferent about the plow and wagon;  
Donkeys don't submit like that  
For they are sensitive  
And cry continually under their burden;  
Yes, they are animals of sensibility  
Even if they aren't intelligent enough  
To count money or discuss religion.  
(SUFWM)

And while Field enjoys Spring, he is no lover of Nature, trees in particular:

I would no more be familiar with them than with a tiger.  
Not that they will bite,  
(They will only eat you up when you are dead, and your dog)  
But they are of the same order of wildness. . . .

I have to grant their right to possession of the earth  
For they grow in perfect obedience to the laws of nature;  
On this ball rolling through the heavens  
Their million sucking roots take grip like claws,  
Trunks rise and open into fierce branches and glittering leaves,  
And they stand up in the sky,  
Heads waving among the stars,

Risking outer space with its terrifying view:  
The giant breed, of which we are the pigmies.

(SUFWM)

Field looks at the world from a vantage point the exact opposite of Whitman's. Instead of looking down from high above the rooftops of the world, Field peeks out from behind desks, over books, or out of dark corners. However, he still sees the mighty sum of things, such as the view "I so depend on to free me from this office / For trips to Hoboken and back like the ferry boat makes: / The perfect place to read my heart in" (SUFWM). But perhaps the best contrast to Whitman is suggested in Field's poem about the statue of liberty. While Whitman undoubtedly would see the statue's arm reaching up to him, Field stands at her feet, feeling genuine compassion:

Forever a prisoner in the harbor  
On her star-shaped island of gray stones  
She has turned moldy looking and shapeless  
And her bronze drapery stands oddly into the wind

From this prison-like island  
I watch the ships sailing away without me  
Disappearing one by one, day after day,  
Into the unamerican distance,

And in my belly is one sentence: *Set Freedom Free*,  
As the years fasten me into place and attitude,  
Hand upraised and face into the wind  
That no longer brings tears to my eyes.

(SUFWM)

The fact that Field's world is small should in no way suggest that the voice is timid or frail. There is no trace of diffidence. The sharp sense of humor prevents that. His treatment of the theme of human decay in "The Dirty Floor" is typical of how his strong comic distance can arrest any drift toward puniness. He observes the floor is dirty not only from soot but from falling hair, his and others: "We are shedding more than we realize" (SUFWM). And time refuses to cooperate long enough for him to gather up the scraps:

What is left of us after years of shitting and shedding?  
Are we whom our mothers bore or some stranger now  
With the name of son, but nameless,  
Continually relearning the same words  
That mean, with each retelling, less.  
(SUFWM)

What conclusion can one reach amidst all this frightening decay:

I am alive at least. Quick, who said that?  
Give me the broom. The leftovers sweep the leavings away.  
(SUFWM)

Man as a leftover isn't much, but better than nothing at all, better than dead hair.

It is not surprising that Field's diction is as unpretentious as his voice and his philosophy. He probably uses less figurative language than any other successful poet. It is one of the qualities that accounts for his distinctiveness as well as his success; for with his informal, conversational tone, even the most subtle use of metaphor could sound out of place. He is primarily a narrative poet, one who keeps description to a minimum. "Another problem I try to deal with is how boring most poetry is, and how to make it interesting. A formal voice puts me to sleep. Clever description, too. I like a good story, lots of schmaltz (no more distinctions between sentiment and sentimentality!), dirty jokes or just jokes,

secrets told." While his narratives project highly evocative images, Field is not the type of poet who strains for that magical combination of words that explodes only after much study. However, the absence of this is no weakness. It is his strength. He has perhaps the finest ear since Williams, and yet Field cannot legitimately be compared to anyone. His voice is distinctively his own, escaping somehow the influences of both the "academics" and the "wild men." Nothing about his poetry is forced. It never sounds consciously "poetic." And so it is quite natural for him to avoid excessive use of figurative language. He relies mostly on simile, for that is the figure most natural to spoken language. Some examples from "The Bride of Frankenstein" will help illustrate. The bride is described as "the prettiest monster-woman you ever saw / with a body like a pin-up girl", a comparison which is far from unique. But it can be defended as a choice over something more original. It is the language of Hollywood, the home of the pin-up. A different allusion would sound out of place, probably too literary. Later in the poem he tells of her first conscious moment when she is brought in for the macabre mating:

She awakens slowly,  
she bats her eyes,  
she gets up out of the equipment,  
and finally she stands in all her seamed glory,  
a monster princess with a hairdo like a fright wig,  
lightning flashing in the background  
like a halo and a wedding veil,  
like a photographer snapping pictures of great moments.

She stands and stares with her electric eyes,  
beginning to understand that in this life too  
she was just another body to be raped.  
The monster is ready to go:  
He roars with joy at the sight of her,



so they let him loose and he goes right for those knockers.  
And she starts screaming to break your heart  
and you realize that she was just born:  
In spite of her big tits she was just a baby.

The implicit metaphors "seamed glory" and "electric eyes" and the three similes contribute a vividness to the portrait, but they are more effective because they are so pedestrian. There is no chance that the reader will become enraptured with the descriptive language to the point he will forget what is going on in the narrative. Despite Field's humorous handling of the old movie situations, he never lets us forget the underlying serious note. Chaplin's clown was funnier because he was also pathetic. Field's poems are more profoundly comic because they capture moments just a quarter turn removed from tragedy. Like Chaplin's clown, Field evokes laughter but tugs at the heart at the same time. And while Chaplin helped to close the gap between his medium and Chaucer's, Field works to reduce the distance between Chaplin and Eliot.

*Charles Stetler and Gerald Locklin*

#### NOTES

1. Both by Grove Press, whose editions are used here. Quotations from *Stand Up, Friend* are distinguished by inclusion in SUFWM. The comments by Field are from personal correspondence with the writers.

## ☪ ONE GOOD KISS

How many times do we actually get ONE GOOD KISS? Not often, or at least not me. I remember when I was in fifth grade, and I started going out with this guy named Jonathan Holland. He was a cutie, and he invited me over to his house. Well . . . while we were there, I asked him if I could kiss him, and what did he say, "Ewww, that's gross." I chased him around the house with my lips poked out. "Mom, she's scaring me," he said. "I just wanted to kiss the boy," I said, trying to come up with an excuse to get closer to him. Well . . . obviously that didn't work out, but when I was in sixth grade I got a new boyfriend. His name was Cameron. He came over to my house one day, and the first thing I thought was, "I'm gonna kiss him. I just know it." So I walked up to him, and he asked me if he could kiss me. I was a little nervous, but I was like, "Heck yeah." We were in my room, and I was sitting on the bed, and so I closed my eyes, and when I did, I felt his tongue lick my face. He totally missed! Oh my gosh, what a weirdo. Then my mom walked in, and we didn't get another chance, so that was a blow up.

I went down to my aunt's house in South Carolina, and she had this big akita dog, named ZOE. I was so bored, but the only thing I wanted to do was kiss. I don't know why, but I just wanted to have that happy, dopey kind of feeling. I got bored, so I started talking to the dog. "I just want one good kiss," I said, looking at him. Well before I knew it, he bit my leg. "That's not the kind of kiss I wanted," I said, getting angry. My aunt walked in and said, "What's the matter?" "I told the dog I wanted a kiss, and she bit me," I said. "Well what did you expect?" she said. It was not my night, and my leg was really hurting.

By the time I was in eighth grade, I still hadn't gotten a good kiss yet. I had come to the conclusion that I was never going to have a good kiss. My mom saw that I was sad, and she asked me what was wrong. "I'm never going to get one good kiss, am I?" I said, crying to her. Then she kissed me on the cheek. "Thanks, but that just doesn't cut it," I said, looking at her. I found myself all alone in my dark room, wondering if I was ever going to get ONE GOOD KISS. Then I heard rocks banging up against my window, and I looked at the window, and it was my friend Adam. "Hold on, I'm coming down to kiss you," I said. "What did you say?" he replied looking at me. "I mean, I'm coming down. I'm pissed at you," I said, try-

ing to cover up from before. So I walked down the stairs, opened the door, and ran over to the window that he was throwing rocks at. I closed my eyes and poked out my lips. "What are you doing?" he said. "I'm ready to kiss you," I said looking at him. "Well, I just wanted to borrow your homework," he said with this look on his face like he was ready to run off. "Oh, I see," I said, looking with tears in my eyes. So I ran up to my room, got my homework, and brought it back down to him. Then he leaned over and kissed my hand and walked away. "Next time you decide to kiss me, try my lips!" I said screaming at him.

So when I got into tenth grade, I started going out with this new guy named Stephen. He was a total hottie, and I really wanted to kiss him! He asked me to go to the movies with him one Saturday night, and of course I said yes. So when Saturday night came around, I got all spiffy, and he picked me up to go to the movies. Everything was going great, and I just knew he was going to kiss me! That night we went to go see the movie, "Never Been Kissed." "Man, that fit me perfectly," I thought as I was watching the movie. So after the movie was over, we stayed seated for a while. He was just staring at me, but nothing was happening! So I got up and started to walk down the stairs, and he pulled my arm around and kissed me on the lips. After he kissed me I was smiling so much, I somehow missed a stair and fell down the rest of them to the bottom. I sure did feel like a dummy after that night! But at least I got my kiss, my ONE GOOD KISS!

Never wish for one good kiss,  
Or you'll get 50 bad ones before you get the right one,  
It's not worth kissing if they can't kiss anyway,  
So don't waste your time looking,  
There is so much more to life,  
So why worry?  
When you know that one guy will find you in a hurry!

*Susan Stewart*

## ☪ ARGUMENT FOR TREE HUGGING

My father sat upright in his green upholstered chair  
Flipping through Mark Twain until  
He became a raft floating down the Mississippi.  
Sometimes when I walked by, he would take my hands  
Stroke them wrist to fingertips and say  
You have such long, beautiful fingers, my dear.

Yesterday he came to me as an old Jeffrey Pine  
Breaking my heart wide open, our bodies hugging bark  
To belly, my cheek pressed against his sun-warmed breast.  
I dug my fingers into his wrinkled brow  
Smoothed out all his worries, then  
Buried my face into his chest and wept.

At his feet I made an altar of feathers and beads,  
Strung puka shell around his neck  
To celebrate his return.  
And, that this time, when he reached up  
Through the mycorrhizal web,  
I could hear him whispering  
*Put your arms around me child!*

Kayce Verde

## ☿ THE OVERELABORATE EXPLANATION

buys a lime-green silk dress for the harvest dance.

It would have picked a cheaper one, but none fit right, and it's allergic to synthetics.

Now it shimmies and shakes around the room, teasing the farm boys who tell sweethearts they're only staring at the green fabric—the way it swells, and wiggles in the wind like summer corn.

The overelaborate explanation is made of soap and twine and bottlecaps and grease and sugar and spice and titanium and Bufferin and puppy dog tails and Whitman's Samplers and cymbidium orchids and stopped watches and acetylcholine and slime and keys to safe deposit boxes and shirts on backwards, buttoned wrong, all boiled in a fine kettle of fish.

I first met one on a trip Down Under (by way of Inferiority Complex with a stop-off at Panic Attack).

A month later, one ran up to me crying, "I got lost on my way home, then a car knocked me into a mud puddle that ruined my blouse and skirt, and soaked my homework before a dog ate it."

Out of pity, I let it change clothes in my room; that's why its panties are rolled up in my bed.

The overelaborate explanation strolled aboard a DC 10 by mistake, wearing a poisoned tie-tack, and two shoe-bombs.

It used to hang out with the weakest gladiators at the Coliseum, and, pretending to polish them, groped statues at the Parthenon.

Dad brought one home from Dallas, where he'd gone "on business."  
Momma cried all night.

My neighbors Ted and Maryann use modern fertilizers and drip-watering to ensure a healthy crop.

In the Superbowl, as in the last election, the overelaborate explanation  
won an upset, and lost in a rout.

On News at Five, it arrives after, "Now this . . . "

I've tried for months to introduce it to a woman I know who has gigantic  
aspirations.

On long commutes, it helps prevent heat rashes, nosebleeds, and scabies.

It lurks behind the theater curtain, swigging beer, hoping the crowd's  
impatience will grow big enough to roar.

Civil servants and *glitterati*, plus their interns and sex-slaves, plan to hold  
a benefit for it,

Proceeds to go to starving third world refugees, unless they disappear  
in a mysterious boating tragedy.

I was cleaning trash out of the streets and giving free Po-Boys to orphans  
when I looked into a shop window and saw a whole litter of  
overelaborate explanations wriggling beside their mom; and there  
was one, the runt—his siblings were crowding him out, he couldn't  
reach a nipple, and, well, my heart went out to him, and even though  
he cost too much, I had no place for him, and my wife hates them,  
hell, I took him home, figuring "He's small; what harm can he do?"

But after three weeks of feeding, damned if he didn't swell into a behemoth,  
and eat up my life savings, and cost me my job, house, marriage, kids,  
And that's why I'm not an oil baron, or diamond duke, or junk bond  
potentate, or computer software pope today.

*Charles Harper Webb*

## ☼ THE SUICIDE ROOM

Losers-in-Love slump through the door, broken hearts in wrung-out hands, waiting for absinthe and glue.

The Ruined-in-Business clutch ledgers and spread sheets, eyes stapled to the bottom line.

The Proud-Who-Have-Lost-Face stumble in, holding their heads worn smooth as eggs.

The Bummed-&-Bored slouch in—sighing, shrugging, droning,  
"It's not fair."

The Disgraced back in. Even from the rear, they blush.

The Disgraced-in-Politics remain in office now, instead of coming here.

The Crippled jog in; the Dismembered dance in, whole.  
Death is better, they agree.

Lunatics lurch in, hugging themselves strait-jacket style. Lost in their lives, they are lost now.

The Existentially Depressed slump in, weeping. No one, least of all God, can dry their eyes.

Good Catholics arrive cringing. They expect a holy tongue-lashing, then flames;

But God seems to be a tortoise with a shell like the sun, and gentle eyes. For the first time ever, they relax.

The Terminally Ill step out of limos, humming "O Dem Golden Slippers."

They swap tales of life on earth, and grin, and scarcely notice when they're lifted like soap bubbles, shimmering, up into the heavenly sky.

*Charles Harper Webb*

## ☿ ONE BIG DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

Notice how, plopped on the pot, all people assume  
The Thinker pose. Consider how many phrases—  
"white as snow," "cold as a well-digger's ass"—  
are spoiled because, to so many, they've seemed so right.  
Eavesdrop on lovers, and you'll hear the very words  
you've moaned, sure you were God's Own Original.  
Science states that we're all children of an "Eve"  
who lived a mere hundred-and-fifty thousand years ago.  
So we're incestors; that's true. Toss our furred,  
hoofed, and winged brethren into the pot,  
and we're cannibals too.

I defy you to watch chimps  
dismember a squealing macaque, and not see relatives.  
Conjunctivitis germs may rightly be called "Cuz."  
Man's dominion of the world is based, not on moral right,  
but brute power. I can kick any dog that takes it,  
and drown the cat if it won't purr. I owe my bear-  
skin rug no apologies.

If the old man whose condo sits  
under my sister's makes her cry by claiming  
that she "walks too loud," I can stomp down and tell him,  
"Bother her again, I'll introduce my baseball bat  
to your brain-pan." And if I do, and go to jail,  
the slobbering moose who'll try to rape me in my cell  
is practically my long-lost twin.

*Charles Harper Webb*



## ✿ AT THE WRITERS CONFERENCE

He steals the nightgown of the fattest student:  
a dietician who writes medical thrillers.  
As blue silk trails behind him like a comet's tail,  
he flaps and dashes through the dorms, exposing  
his cleverness. Everyone agrees: his theft expresses  
the same artistic daring his characters display.

Everyone grasps the humor, irony, and pathos  
of his prank—the deft way he satirizes gluttony  
in general, and this specific case (her prose excessive  
as her appetite), while at the same time he holds up  
like dripping heads the human capacity  
for cruelty, and the sadness of the nurse's life.

Crouched in the faculty restroom, he sees her  
waddle by, sobbing, unable to sleep.  
As faculty stride in to do what even the most  
famous must, they offer their congratulations,  
their respect, the opportunities that up to now  
have been denied him, and for which he's come.

*Charles Harper Webb*

## ☞ GENEALOGY

Self history in quest of  
self knowledge brought me  
today  
to this  
church cemetery.

A certain history  
made visible to me today.  
I saw my last name—Whealton—  
etched on so many stones . . .  
markers of my heritage . . .  
written here  
and here and on a stone next to this one,  
and over there, and there and there and  
there . . .  
Why were my ancestors put into the ground,  
like plants?

From dust thou art.—  
it says in the bible,  
and to dust one must return . . .  
but there is no such thing as death.

I see my ancestors  
immortalized on tombstones  
with the marker Whealton—the name I share.  
Will I live on as well, through  
my writing? I wonder.

This road I've traveled . . .  
this land I've seen

—as I sought to discover this place—  
seems too quiet—too deserted . . .  
a town of ghosts, but here  
my ghosts tell me nothing.  
I imagine I've found a ghost town.  
Up front, within the church that my  
great-great grandfather built  
I observe  
signs—pictures—of recent visitations.  
Names and faces, in picture albums  
found inside the doorway . . .  
descendants of those names  
on the stones.

What did I come to find?  
A place holding clues to my heritage?  
or something more,  
something I could touch  
and see . . .  
a certain hard stone's proof.  
(proof of what?)  
Stones that need for nothing,  
not sun or food,  
nor water  
to hold their forms  
and their names.  
All I found was dust—along  
the roads and among the stone markers.

*Bruce M. Whealton, Jr.*

✿ Even Under Torture the al 'Qaeda  
Are Dreaming

And God is near and Paradise:  
The sound of water in thousands of fountains  
Like freshets after a Spring storm in the hills of Paktia,  
Where trees and shrubs heavy with fruit dip low under the weight  
Of songbirds, where angels are like beautiful maidens  
From Gardez, and Khandahar, the quick boys of Khowst and Herat . . .

It is not dust nor fire, parched tongues, blackened corpses,  
In the dream; it is a voice calling as if to prayer.  
And all heads are bowed.

It is a sword drawn at the end of day.  
It is a sweet taste of honey from a wedding feast.  
It is a taste like bitter herbs and blood  
Flowing from the mouths of caves  
In mountains where God's hand moves  
Like flies, like dust, like a long forgetting  
Where dreamers mimic the dead.  
There is nothing they carry.  
There is nothing they remember.  
And the dry plains are filled with a chorus.

We are all strangers in this land  
Where prayers are like the leaves of the pomegranate  
Eaten by locusts—devoured by those who have  
No king. When the spark ignites scrotum and glans  
The dreamers awaken, drowning  
In the sound of the blue Caribbean Sea.

*Jackson Wheeler*

## ✿ Japanese Alphabet Written 60 Times

*After drawing by Hiroko Yoshimoto*

Scribbled	Rising
furiously	from
as	the
though	page
a	a
suicide's	whirlwind
To-Do	Divine!
List	Kamikaze!
	Amen

*Jackson Wheeler*

☞ AN AUTUMN SONNET FOR HELOISE

*"Green, green, I want you green . . . . ."*

though, as Lorca knew so well, the green cycling  
lasts for such a short time, Fall's colors succeeding  
even over the ash, the aspen, the rowan or the yew.  
Our cooked scrub oak in these, our sunstruck canyons,  
they take their only fire from the stars caught  
into their dry twigs, outlined against a blackened sky.  
I want you green but will have you as you are,

aging into a beauty all yourself, a strong wind  
at our backs, we can still laugh that the earth moves  
us, still loving, we pass through and through as I  
discover the changing colors of your autumned eyes, softer  
than even I remember, your eyes speak of eternities  
of love that lie forever before us, green o it is all green.

*"Verde, verde, te quiero verde . . . . ."*

*Keith Wilson*

☯ Last Spring

Finch on the branch  
And where is his song?

*Keith Wilson*

## ☞ Cow Country Ceremony

A lonely clapboard church on the mesa  
comes suddenly to life as pickups roll in,  
lights switch on and smoke starts to rise  
from the chimney

a fiddle scratches a note  
just to test the air, a guitar tunes up, the old  
piano plays a honky-tonk tune. Elderly ranchers and  
their plump wives wait till the music changes  
slows to old-time pieces and they lumber out two  
stepping into space where the pews used to be and

my son, just about 8, who has gone to Mescalero Apache  
Mountain Spirit Dances, Santo Domingo Corn Dances,  
Taos Eagle Dances and Yaqui Deer Dances all his short  
life whispers worriedly into my ear, "Dad, they don't  
really think that is a dance, do they?"

*Keith Wilson*



⌘ ANNA KARENINA

When I quoted the opening line  
Of *Anna Karenina*  
To my mother—

"All happy families are alike,  
But an unhappy family is unhappy  
In its own way"—

She disagreed.

"Oh, no, no," she declared,  
"There are no happy families.

"All families are unhappy."

*Ted Wojtasik*

## ☪ Passing

I don't like to pass,  
But I pass if I need to pass.  
I imagine colliding head-on  
Or flipping into a ditch  
Or sliding into a tree—  
Car totaled, neck broken, dead—  
All for a mere ten minutes.

Sometimes, I'm content to drive  
At the same speed as the car  
In front of me, even if it's moving  
Five miles below the speed limit.

Sometimes, I'm not content—  
Impatient, running late,  
Just wanting to get where I need to go—  
All for a mere ten minutes.

It's easier to do at night  
With the oncoming headlights  
To warn you or, rather,  
Not to warn you but to guide you  
With their absence—darkness permits confidence  
To press down on the accelerator  
And to pull over the broken yellow line  
Into the opposite lane,  
Traveling parallel and opposite  
At the same time.

I don't like to pass,  
But I pass if I need to pass.  
I pass when I'm driving home  
Or driving away from home.

*Ted Wojtasik*

✿ STANDING WITH MY MOTHER AND A TOUR  
GUIDE IN EMILY DICKINSON'S BEDROOM,  
JUNE 10, 2002

"Some visitors weep," the tour guide said,  
"When they step into this room."

My father had died  
Two months ago  
The day I stood in  
Emily Dickinson's bedroom.

He would have liked  
To have been here,  
Not that he cared for her poetry,  
But that he enjoyed little adventures  
And the stop at McDonald's  
On the way home.

My mother wanted to know  
What type of wood Emily Dickinson's  
Bed was made from—it was the original bed.

The tour guide did not know  
(But said that she could find out).

It was here, I thought,  
Here, that she wrote her poems.

Here, that she slept.  
Here, that she dreamt.

Here, where I stand without a father.

*Ted Wojtasik*

## ☯ KADENA

Kadena, Kadena,  
Thy name is, Kadena,<sup>1</sup> --

The instant I stood on Ampo Hill,<sup>2</sup> and had an entire view of Kadena Base  
popped inside me, . . . .  
the landscape had popped, . . . .  
Low hills, luxuriating hills. The *utaki*<sup>3</sup> of Kamakawa-san's ancestors is  
moving

In the Kadena Base something has started to move clattering<sup>4</sup>  
Something had started to move clattering  
It, may have been the sound of the fire of an oar  
Or it, may have been the sound of the heart of the air striking a rock

Ura (cove), Urama, . . . . Ura (cove), Urama  
Kumpon, Kumpon, Ura Urama  
Uru, Urama, . . . . Ura (cove), Urama  
Kumpon, Kumpon, Ura, Urama

That moment, my heart may have had forgotten "English"  
Yeees, for a long time, I had had forgotten "English," . . . .  
"English" no longer, has, "the power of silence," . . . .  
"An *Upturned Gem*<sup>5</sup>-the glitter of a gem lying face up, like a log, . . . ."  
The wing-beat of Kumpon of the loneliness of the edge of the universe was  
reaching my ears, . . . .  
Kumpon, Kumpon, Ura, Urama

Kadena, Kadena,  
Thy name is, Kadena, --

The waves of Hamakawa-san's heart turned into an "*ayago*,"<sup>6</sup> and created a

corner in my heart, that was certain  
Kadena, luxuriating hills, low hills, . . . .  
narrow snakes<sup>7</sup> and narrow pigs, seemingly enjoyable travel routes, . . . .  
Clatterin', clattering, . . . . --, the heart of an "ayago," was reaching my ears,  
from the wave/back, . . . .  
clattering clat  
clopping clop

Encountering Uchibanari,<sup>8</sup> Yûbanare<sup>9</sup>, my heart was beginning to  
ex -- foliate  
Ampo Hill's, Uru, Kumpon  
Ampo Hill's, Uru, Kumpon  
Katakana's clattering, the shoulder<sup>10</sup> clattering, the body,<sup>11</sup> shaking it, calling  
Family member or family member, or, clattering clat, . . . . clattering  
clattering, a diving fighter's machine guns echo, . . . .  
Ampo Hill's, Uru, Kumpon

Uru, Su'u, . . . . couldn't, had had known, the "Man'yo gana,"<sup>12</sup> . . . .  
couldn't, have had known, "words," but then, why pouncing,<sup>13</sup> why is the  
heart, why is it pouncing, . . . .

Why is the heart pouncing, why is the heart pouncing, just like a tree being in  
Love with a tree  
Or, it, may be the attribute of, "the matter called the heart, . . . ."  
Is matter the heart's true nature? Saigyô-san,<sup>14</sup> --

Why is the heart pouncing, why is the heart pouncing, just like a tree being in  
love with a tree

Kadena, Kadena,  
Thy name is, Kadena, --

Under the eye of NHK TV, Takahashi Rho-san's camera "why is the heart  
Pouncing, why is the heart pouncing,"  
"Kadena, Kadena, (line-breaking)

Thy name is, Kadena, --" so, I was going on to write, . . . .

When I was beginning to notice that the base was parting from me, --Inside-  
Apart, Evening-, apart,  
Both the universe and the isles, are lonely, so saying  
I was beginning to notice that they were parting, --

Inside-parting, Evening-parting,  
Tree leaf, *tenmoku*,<sup>15</sup> --

Kadena, Kadena,  
Thy name is, Kadena, --

#### TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. Kadena is the name of a small town west of Okinawa City. Its dominant feature is a U.S. air base, the largest military base in the Far East. Known as KAB, it takes up 83% of the town of a mere six square miles (about a quarter of Manhattan), requiring its population of 14,000 to live in a space of a little over one square mile. (One third of the Okinawa Island is taken and used by the U.S. Air Force.) The poem "Kadena" is in Gozo Yoshimasu's most recent book, which comes with the English title of *The Other Voice* (Shichosh, 2002).

Born in Tokyo, in 1939, Gozo Yoshimasu has been at the forefront of experimental poetry since his debut with *Shuppatsu* (*Starting Out*), in 1964. He is especially known for his distinctive way of reciting his poetry, at once incantatory and hypnotic. St. Andrews Press published in 1989 *Osiris, The God of Stone*, a complete translation by Hiroaki Sato of one of his books,

*Oshirisu Ishi no Kami* (Shichosha, 1984). The same book has subsequently been translated into Portuguese and French on the basis of the Sato translation.

"Kadena" partly relies on sound associations, as do many of Yoshimasu's poems. Those sections are in effect untranslatable. The original is written in a combination of Chinese characters (*kanji*) and the Japanese syllabary *katakana*, which give the poem a foreign touch or a telegraphic effect.

2. Ampo Hill is a low overlook made to provide a sweeping view of Kadena Air Base. The word Ampo is an abbreviated Japanese name of the Japanese-United States Mutual Security Treaty and immediately evokes the Ampo Struggle, in 1960, the greatest anti-government demonstration mounted in Japan's modern history. It was in opposition to the renewal of the treaty. The renewal was accomplished despite the huge riots.

3. A small, simple structure that enshrines a family's ancestral deities in Okinawa. It is usually built in a wooded area. The word originally appears to have meant "a safe place." In the past, a vestal offered prayers to it and narrated the deity's song during a festival.

4. *Katakata*: an onomatopoeic word that means "clattering." Later on Yoshimasu morphs the word into *katakana*.

5. A phrase that appears in a passage in Book III of John Keats' "Endymion," where a description occurs "...a youthful wight / Smiling beneath a coral diadem, / Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem, / Appear'd," etc. Junzaburo Nishiwaki (1892-1984) famously used the phrase in one of his early poems, a tercet.

6. Okinawa word for "song."

7. May allude to Emily Dickinson's poem that begins: "A narrow fellow in the Grass / Occasionally rides; / You may have met him--did you not / His notice sudden is."

8. Place name: "Inside-apart."

9. Place name: "Evening-apart." Both Uchibanari and Yubanare are elegant isles of South Island, Uchibanari is the external isle of Iriomote, and Yubanare, that of Kakeromo.

10. *Kata*.

11. *Karada*.

12. A complex system devised to express Japanese words through Chinese characters: sometimes through meanings, sometimes through sounds, and sometimes through Japanese "readings." Here, the sets of Chinese characters applied to the place names of Uru and Su'u prompt the poet to think of the *Man'yo gana*.

13. Yoshimasu uses the same character to *hazumu*, here given as "pounce," that he applied earlier to "*hajikeru*," given as "pop."

14. Saigyō (1118-1189): A warrior turned Buddhist monk and a constant traveler who was counted among the greatest poets in his lifetime and ever since. Stories, legendary or otherwise, began to be told about him before his death, and less than a hundred years after he achieved nirvana, *The Tale of Saigyō* (*Saigyō Monogatari*) came into being. Among the poems

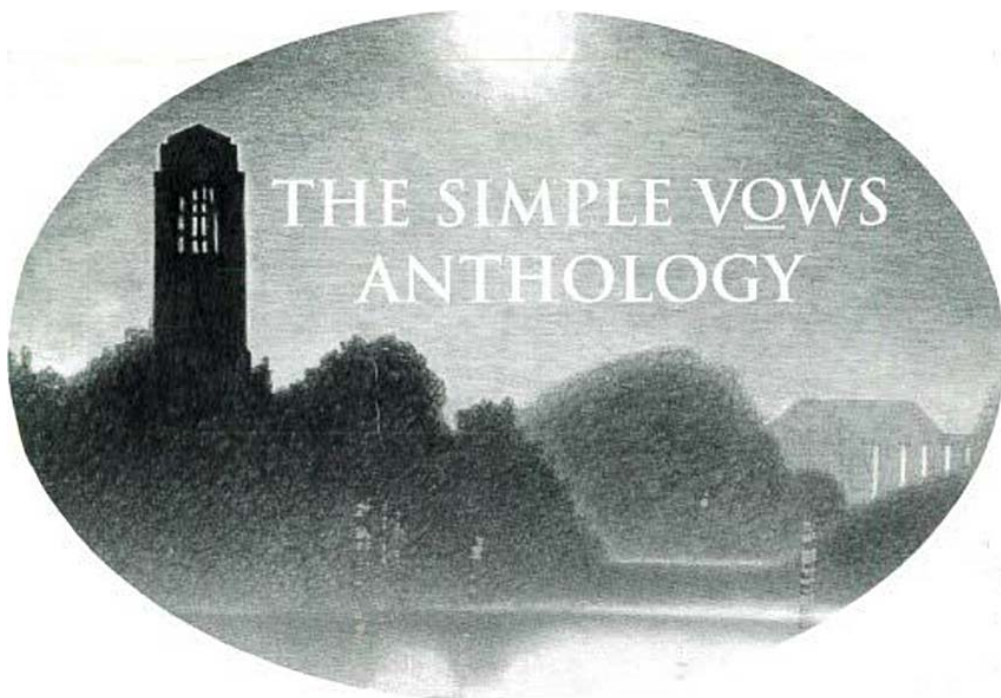


grouped as "110 tanka on love" is *Kokoro kara kokoro ni mono o omowasete mi o kurushimuru waga mi narikeri*, "Making my heart brood on things because of my heart, I torture myself, my own self."

15. A shallow flat tea bowl used in tea ceremony. Also, any tea bowl.

*Gôzô Yoshimasu*

*Translated by Hiroaki Sato*



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- Muriel Ramirez
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- Hiroaki Sato
- Kazuko Shiratshi
- Shelby Stephenson
- Charles Harper Webb
- Keith Wilson
- Gôzô Yoshimasu
- and others

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